No. 684.) For Week Ending February 8th 1902. (One Penny

SHORT STORIES

A WEEKLY MAGAZINE FOR HOME AND TRAIN

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For OCTOBER, 1902.

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LIST OF PRIZES:

1	Cash Prize, £100 ...	£1 0	0
1	Cash Prize, £75	75	0
1	Cash Prize, £50	50	0
1	Cash Prize, £45	45	0
5	Pianos (Walnut Cases), £40 each ... ... per pair	200	0
10	Gents' Bicycles (free wheels), £17 17s. each ...	178	10
10	Ladies' Bicycles (free wheels), £17 17s. each ...	178	10
10	Cash Prizes, £10 each ...	100	0
20	Jones's Sewing Machines, £8 each...	160	0
20	Cases Cutlery, £8 each ...	160	0
20	Cash Prizes, £5 each ...	100	0
100	Dinner Services (50 pieces), £2 10s. each... ...	250	0
100	Gold Filled Gents' Watches, £2 10s. each ...	250	0
100	Ladies' Dressing Bags, £2 5s. each	225	0
100	Handsome Timepieces, £2 5s. each	225	0
100	Cash Prizes, £2 each ...	200	0
300	Ladies' Travelling Trunks, £2 each	600	0
300	Fancy Bed Quilts, £1 10s. each	450	0
1000	pairs Blankets, £1 per pair	1000	0
500	Basket Arm Chairs, upholstered, £1 each... ...	500	0
1000	Ladies' Umbrellas, 15/- ea.	750	0
1000	Gents' Umbrellas, 15s. ea.	750	0
400	½-doz Best Electro-plated Forks, large, 15s. per ½-doz.	300	0
1000	Handsome Meat Carver, with Steel in Case, 15s. set	750	0
1000	Ladies' Rolled Gold Bracelets, 15s. each ...	£750	0
400	½-doz. Best Electro-plated Forks, small, 14s. per ½-doz.	280	0
1000	pairs of Bed Sheets, 12/6 per pair	625	0
1000	White Linen Table Cloths, 12/6 each	625	0
500	Cash Prizes, 10s. each ...	250	0
1000	½-doz. Table Knives, large, 8s. per ½-doz.	450	0
1000	½-doz. Table Knives, small, 8s. per ½-doz.	400	0
1000	Ladies' Leather Purses, 2s. each	400	0
1000	Ladies' Umbrellas, 7s. 6d. each	375	0
1000	Ladies' Serge Dress Lengths, 7s. 6d. each ...	375	0
1000	½-doz. Teaspoons (Best Electro-plated), 5s. per ½-doz.	250	0
4000	Ladies' Chatelaine Bags, 5s. each	1000	0
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38,199		**£15,362**	0

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The Tablets of **Watson's Matchless Cleanser** and of **Nubolic Soap** are enclosed in distinctive wrappers. The prizes will be awarded in the above order to persons who send the highest numbers of wrappers of either soap or both of them combined to **Joseph Watson & Sons Limited, Whitehall Soap Works, Leeds,** not later than October 31st, 1902. Each wrapper must be complete, and each package of wrappers sent will be taken as one lot. Separate entries must be sent under separate covers. Full postage or carriage must be paid. Each parcel must contain the full name and address of the sender, and the number of wrappers sent in must be marked on the same paper. On outside of parcel write legibly "Prize Competition." A list, giving result of the Competition, will be sent with each prize when it is sent out. Every wrapper must have first contained soap. No employee of Joseph Watson & Sons Limited will be eligible. Should any dispute arise as to the contents of any parcel, or any other matter connected with this competition, the decision of Joseph Watson & Sons Limited, Leeds, to be final. All prizes will be despatched on or before December 20th, 1902.

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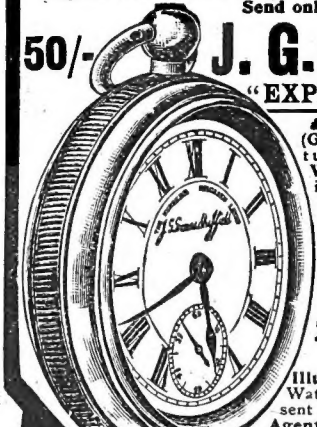

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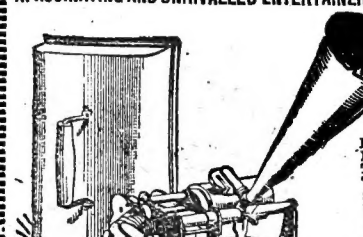

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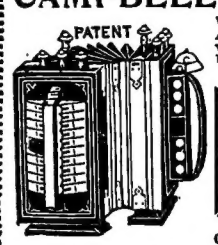

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SHORT STORIES

No. 634.] For the Week Ending February 8th, 1902. [ONE PENNY.

The House on the Moor.

By J. Le. Hornibrook.

"HULLO, Eastlake!" called out Lattimer, as he caught sight of me in the wedge at Paddington on Christmas Eve. "Where away?"

A man—an utter stranger—who happened to be brushing past at the moment, turned his head quickly and looked at me in a curious, arrested manner as my name fell on his ears. He hung for an instant irresolutely in the midst of a stride; and then, with another quick, interested glance at me, passed on and was swallowed up in the crowd.

"Who was that?" asked Lattimer, curiously, upon whom the incident had not been lost.

"Haven't the haziest idea," I answered, quite as much in the dark as to the stranger's identity as he was. "Never laid eyes on the man before, to my knowledge."

"Very strange," he ruminated. "He pricked up his ears the instant he heard your name. And there was something odd in his look, too. Depend upon it, there's more in this than meets the eye. Where are you off to?"

"Down Mavistock way. I'm booked for Christmas at Coombe-Leigh."

"The Barringtons?" he said, with a sly, quizzing look.

"Yes," I admitted, well aware that there was one particular member of the family in his mind at the time.

"Well, take care of yourself, old man. I shouldn't be surprised if that unknown friend of yours has his eye upon you, for some reason or other. By the way——"

He stopped short, puckered his brows and stroked his chin in a meditative manner, as if he were chasing some idea through his brain, which, however, managed to elude him.

"What is it?" I asked.

"Oh, it doesn't matter. There was something I wanted to tell you, but it's gone clean out of my head for the moment."

As the empty train for the West backed down to us just then, there was a general scramble for seats, and in the rush I got separated from Lattimer. I was fortunate enough to secure a corner of a smoking carriage; and having stowed away my belongings I leant out of the doorway, looking around for him. I saw him standing at some distance, the same puzzled expression on his face, as if he were still striving to recall what he wanted to say to me. Presently he looked up and caught my eye. With a parting wave of the hand he turned from the spot, and sauntered away.

The train was late in starting, of course, for there were truck-loads of Christmas hampers and parcels of all sorts consigned to the West Country, which took a good deal of handling. Besides, the carriages were packed, and not a few belated passengers were feverishly hunting for seats up to the last moment.

When the guard's whistle sent us off, and the train curved slowly out of the station, I stuck my head out of the carriage window and glanced back along the half-deserted platform. As I did so, I was amazed to see Lattimer dash suddenly into view again, making frantic signals of some kind to me as he raced along with the moving train. Seeing that he could not diminish the distance between us, he pulled up, put his hand to his mouth, and yelled out something; but unfortunately, the shriek of a whistle just then completely drowned his warning shout.

Between one thing and another, I had plenty to occupy my mind during the first hour or so of my journey. I sat with my face to the window, gazing out over the cold, bleak, wintry landscape, and meditating upon the incidents which had occurred previous to my departure. I wondered what Lattimer wanted to convey to me so urgently at the last moment, and if it had anything to do with the appearance of that stranger, whom he seemed to regard with latent suspicion. As I could make nothing out of it, I put the whole thing away from me, and turned to the budget of Christmas numbers which I had brought with me. But still, I could not entirely drag my thoughts back from dwelling on those singular circumstances. A vague consciousness that they foreshadowed some evil in store for me floated hazily through my mind.

At Bristol, where we had a pretty long wait, I made a tour of inspection along the whole length of the train, on the off-chance that the stranger I had seen at Paddington might have come down in it. It was dusk by this time, and though the glow of light in the carriages aided my search, I was unable to pick out anyone in the

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least resembling him. Even among those who were standing on the platform, or hurrying to and fro from the refreshment rooms, I failed to distinguish him.

He put his hand to his mouth and yelled out something.

This being so, I returned to my compartment with the reassuring conviction that I was not shadowed at any rate.

I had to change at Exeter, and on alighting there found that the weather was very different from what it had been in London. It was sharp and piercing enough when I left town; but down here in the West Country, I could see by the watery rim round the gas-lamps at the further end of the platforms, and the marks of wet footprints all over the place, that it was raw, damp, and foggy. There was, in fact, every prospect of a "green" Christmas.

This, however, signified little, since it would have required something more approaching a second deluge to damp the spirit of conviviality at Coombe-Leigh. Christmas there was a thing to remember. None of your modern, half-hearted displays for the sake of the children principally; but a real, genuine, old-English Christmas, with plenty of holly and mistletoe, blazing Yule logs, and beaming faces on every side. I looked forward to meeting the genial and hospitable Sir Brian; big, hearty Jack Barrington, his son and heir; above all, and beyond all, the roguish and bewitching Eva, the youngest of the baronet's three charming daughters.

With such thoughts as these I beguiled the time until the slow train to Mavistock put me down at that station. On the platform I caught sight of the ruddy face and belted figure of Manton, Sir Brian's groom, who had been sent to meet me with the dog-cart.

"You're welcome, sir!" he said, touching his hat, as he took the bag from my hand.

"Thank you, Manton. The train's rather behind-time, I fear."

"It always is, sir, on Christmas Eve. But I've got Master John's mare in the trap, and she'll take us back within the twenty minutes."

It was a good long drive to the baronet's seat, as I knew from experience, but the mare seemed bent upon justifying Manton's opinion of her speed. When we got out on to the lonely country roads, and he let her have her head, she took us along at a spanking pace, the wheels humming like a spinning top.

Fast as we went, however, there were others behind us who went just as fast. Ever since we had cleared the little town, the lights of another trap followed steadily in our wake, keeping close at our heels up hill and down dale. If we swung round a corner, and the bend of the road shut off those lights for a few seconds, they sprang into view again the next moment, like a pair of glaring, watchful eyes, determined to keep us in sight. Looking back through the misty gloom, I could dimly make out the blurred outline of two dark, silent figures seated in the second vehicle.

"Those people behind us, whoever they are, seem bent upon not losing sight of us," I remarked to the groom.

Manton sent a searching look back into the darkness, and appeared puzzled.

"They don't belong to these parts, sir, wherever they come from," he said, evidently rather mystified. "I noticed the trap at the station, and it's a strange one. They've got a smart-looking roan between the shafts; but we'll shake them off presently, for all that."

Just in front of us, the road was lined with trees on either side; and the branches, meeting overhead, formed an inky tunnel through which we had to pass. Manton had to ease the mare here, and proceed with caution, keeping a sharp lookout ahead lest we should meet with any obstruction.

We had got half-way through when I caught the sharp clap, clap of hoofs and whir of wheels close behind us. Glancing round, I found that the strangers had caught up to us, and were evidently about to pass. The light from their lamps showed me that the driver was a tall, burly, sullen-looking individual; but his companion was so muffled up that I could distinguish little of his face or figure.

They drew up close beside us—dangerously close, it seemed to me—while the tall man screwed his head round, and scanned me narrowly behind Manton's back, who was sitting between us. The next second I saw him deliberately pull the roan's head round in our direction; and then came a jarring crash as he dexterously caught the hub of our near wheel. The impact was so sudden and forcible that it very nearly dashed us into the trees at the side; as it was, the mare plunged wildly, and the groom had all he could do to hold her in.

The wanton rascality of the thing made my blood boil; and I half rose from my seat, an angry protest upon my lips. But the stranger, with the coolest insolence, turned the tables by putting the blame upon us.

"Confound you!" he roared to Manton. "What do you mean by pulling across me in that way?"

He leant forward as he spoke, and brought his whip down with a vicious cut across the mare's back. The maddened creature leapt into the air; and then, as the scoundrel in the other trap raised a shout, she jerked her head down with a frightened snort, closed her teeth upon the bit, and away she went at a blind, furious, reckless gallop, that threatened us with destruction every instant.

"Hold on, sir! Hold on tight!" screamed Manton, his face crimson with passion, as he tugged and strained at the reins. "If once—— Oh!"

There was a snap, and the near rein parted in his hands. He made a wild lurch forward to grab the

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broken end as it disappeared over the dash-board, lost his balance, tumbled out on the mare's back, and was pitched off on to the muddy road.

After that, I have a horrified recollection of clinging desperately to the bumping, swaying trap, expecting that every moment would be my last. How long that mad rush continued I cannot say; but, suddenly, there was a swerve—a bump—a crash; and I was shot into the air like a stone from a sling. I reached the ground with a sickening thud, that seemed to jolt every tooth out of my head. And then came darkness—a blank.

* * * * *

In that interval of unconsciousness I must have been picked up and transported to a distance; for when I opened my eyes again I found myself in new and totally strange surroundings. Through the swimming mist which blurred my vision, I could dimly distinguish a round ball of white light within a few yards of me; and that was practically all at first.

As my brain cleared, however, I saw that this ball of light represented a lamp, with an opalescent globe, placed at some little distance from me. My gaze travelled slowly round, and I became aware that I was lying on a couch in a large, square-shaped room; the ceiling being so low that, to my distorted fancy, it seemed to be descending slowly to crush me; and I experienced that horrible, overpowering sensation, such as is produced by a nightmare, in looking up at it.

To escape this disagreeable illusion, I turned my head round towards the lamp again. It stood on a circular table, placed in the very centre of the floor, and which looked like a small island set in the expanse of faded green carpet. Whatever other furniture the room could boast of was moved back against the wall, where I could distinguish little of it.

There was something more than all this, however. Lying open on the floor within a few paces of me, the contents exposed to view, was my portmanteau, which, judging by the way my linen was tossed about, had evidently been thoroughly overhauled. I was so weak that I could not drag myself to it, even if I wanted to. Though, by moving my limbs, I had ascertained that no bones were broken—luckily, I had come down upon soft, sodden ground—I was terribly bruised and shaken by that headlong flight through the air.

When I had taken in my surroundings, I began to consider—vaguely enough at first—where I was, and for what purpose I had been brought here. But, presently, as my mind took a firmer grip of the situation, and every detail of this disastrous journey came vividly back to me, a vague, nameless dread stole upon me. The strangeness of the place, the unknown dangers which threatened me; above all, the ghostly silence that reigned around, filled me with the most ominous forebodings.

I was striving to drag myself from the couch, with some feverish notion of endeavouring to make my escape while I was yet alone, when a door at the other end of the room opened, and two men made their appearance. In the foremost I recognised the tall ruffian who had been directly responsible for the disaster to our dog-cart; the other was the selfsame stranger whom I had last seen on the crowded platform at Paddington!

Neither of the two displayed any immediate concern about me. They did not even bestow a glance in my direction. Standing over near the door, they whispered together for a few moments, but in so low a tone that I was unable to catch even the drift of their conversation. With my senses keenly, almost painfully, on the alert, I lay there and watched them.

Presently the tall man—from what I heard afterwards I have reason to suppose his name was Bradley—crossed the room, and looked down at me with the calm and deliberate observation of one who was summing up the injuries sustained by a horse or a hound. Now that they had me in their power, as helpless, for the moment, as if I was bound hand and foot, the brazen ruffianism which he had exhibited on the road was laid aside, and he appeared disposed to treat me with some show of consideration. But still, as my eye rested upon his great, hulking figure, his huge, red hands, and bare, sinewy wrists, I felt utterly weighed down and overpowered. There was something about the man which told me that, if he were put to it, he would have strangled me as I lay there, without any great compunction.

"Not so much damage, after all, I see," was his comment, when he had run his eye over me. "No bones broken, eh?"

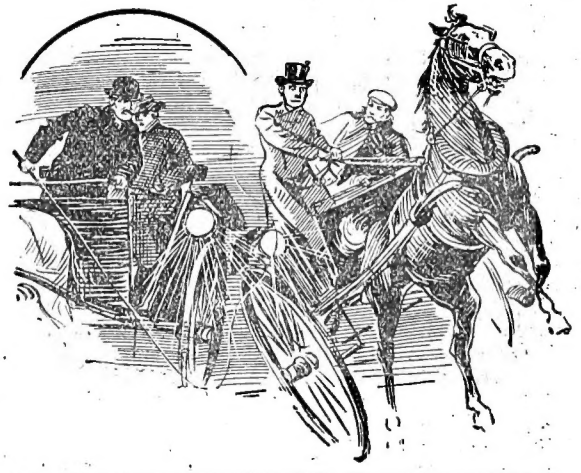
"No," I admitted.

He turned away with a sort of satisfied grunt, and my gaze followed him as he went towards a small side-board, from which he came back with a decanter of brandy and a glass in his hands. He poured a medium quantity of the spirit into the glass, and held it out to me. I hesitated, looking at him doubtfully, for I was not at all sure that the liquor was not drugged.

"Pshaw, man!" he said, evidently divining my suspicions, and tossed it off himself.

Satisfied with the test, I was glad to avail myself of the stimulant, and it seemed to put new life into me. Taking the glass from me again, Bradley retired into the background, leaving me an interrupted view of the second man, to whom I now devoted my whole attention.

He was seated at the table, engaged at the moment in jotting down something with a fountain pen, the tails of his long, loose overcoat trailing on the ground. As he sat there in the strong light of the lamp, his sharp, clean-cut profile turned towards me, I studied him narrowly. It required no prolonged examination, however, to convince me that he was a man of a very



The maddened creature leapt into the air.

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different stamp to his big, blustering colleague; and, moreover, far more to be feared. I had not a doubt that he was the instigator of this rascally business, and the prime mover in it.

"There are a few questions which we shall have to

put to you, Mr. Eastlake," he said, without suspending his work, and speaking in a hard, metallic voice, that had something grating in it. "Perhaps you will be good enough to answer them."

"That depends," I returned.

The pen stopped; and his eyes came round in my direction with a look which it was not at all pleasant to behold.

"It might be well, before we proceed further, that you should realise your precise position at the moment," he remarked, coldly. "Might I ask if you have any idea as to where you are?"

"I have not," I replied.

"Then I will venture to enlighten you. This house stands out on the moors, away from every other habitation, and even from the public roads. There is not, I may safely say, a building of any sort within a mile of it. Across that belt of moorland your voice would have to travel in order to reach a human ear, if you impose upon us the necessity of enforcing your compliance. And as my friend here will tell you," he added, indicating the tall, ominous figure in the background, "there are deep and ugly pits on these same moors, which have a knack of keeping any secret intrusted to them."

He paused; and as I pictured this lonely house, set in a desolate expanse of moor, I confess that I shuddered. To be held a prisoner here, in the custody of two such men, robbed me of the last lingering hope of escape or rescue, and I realised how utterly and completely I was at their mercy.

"Now that I have made the situation plain to you," proceeded the stranger, in the same hard, matter-of-fact tone, "you will probably recognise the futility of any opposition on your part. The questions which I shall put to you need not alarm you, however; they are merely intended to clear the way. To begin with, you are, I understand, an official of the Home Office?"

"I am."

"You are acquainted with the Minister who is at the head of that Department, I suppose?"

"I am."

"Are you brought into personal contact with him?"

"Daily."

"In what capacity?"

"As his private secretary."

I caught a gleam of triumph on the keen face before me.

"Then, Mr. Eastlake," he declared, "you are the very man we want."

The announcement fell on me like a blow; and my heart sank under it. It was very evident that these men had some desperate move in view, in which I was to play an important part, whether I liked it or not. It grew on me that I was in the hands of a couple of dangerous criminals, and that my life depended upon implicit compliance with their demands.

"Might I ask," I said, wishing to know the worst at once, "what it is you require of me?"

"The matter is this," replied the other, leaning forward, and tapping his long fore-finger with the fountain-pen. "There is at the present moment a man confined in Dartmoor Convict Prison, undergoing a life sentence. It is vitally essential that I should obtain access to him; and not only so, but that he should regain his liberty, even if he is eventually captured again. There are interests at stake, the importance of which I cannot exaggerate, and which render his presence absolutely imperative, if only for one hour. More than this I need not say. I may tell you, however, that I have a plan for getting him out; and to-morrow being Christmas Day, will be the most suitable one for my purpose. Most of the warders will have gone out on leave; so that, in case of pursuit, the chances will be more in our favour. Besides, at such a time, discipline is likely to be a trifle lax.

"The first and main difficulty is to gain admittance to the prison. There are, as you may readily suppose, certain reasons which stand in the way of my obtaining an order from the Home Office. Apart from that, it is necessary that it should be of such a stringent nature as to override all formalities and technical objections. It is in this respect that I require your assistance."

"In what way?" I asked.

"I have here," he said, turning to the table, "some of your official paper, with which I took the precaution of providing myself. You are, I have no doubt, perfectly well acquainted with the signature of the Home Secretary; probably you may happen to have a specimen of it by you at the moment. You will write an order such as I require, and sign it with his name; taking care to word it so that no quibble of any kind can be raised. You will also give me a covering letter from yourself, as his private secretary, impressing upon the officials the importance of this order, and desiring them to facilitate my interview with the prisoner. That, briefly, is what I must call upon you to do."

"And if I refuse?" I said.

"If you refuse," he returned, in a perfectly even and level tone, "I can only assure you that you will find a resting-place at the bottom of one of those deep pits out there."

He was silent; and, though, as yet, my mind failed to take in the full significance of this daring scheme, I was keenly alive to the extreme and pressing danger of my position. For the present my sole desire was to gain time, so that I might think the whole matter over quietly, and if possible discover some loophole for escape.

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"Even if I were willing to comply with your demands," I said, "you can see for yourself that I am not in a fit condition to put pen to paper just now. The very shakiness of my handwriting would betray you to the officials."

"That is only reasonable," he replied. "It will be time enough in the morning; and, I daresay, a night's rest on that couch will help to steady your nerves. Only," he added, impressively, taking my consent for granted, "let me urge upon you the necessity of exercising the utmost care when you sit down to write that order. There must be no flaw, either in the document itself, or in the signature. If anything should go wrong, and I am not back in this house to-morrow evening, my friend here will deal with you in the manner I have already pointed out."

He rose as he spoke, gathered up his papers, and withdrew from the room. Bradley followed him, locking the door as he passed through, and I was left to my own uncomfortable and very disquieting reflections.

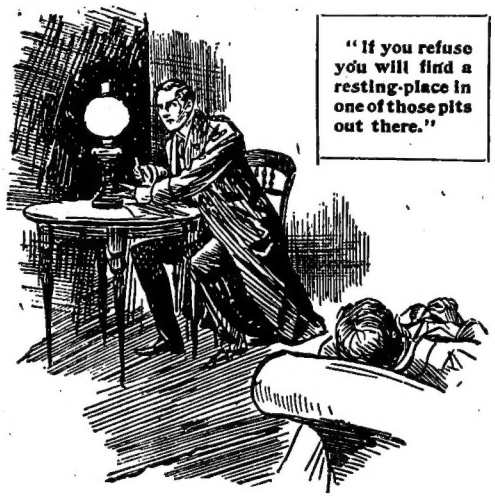
* * * * *

In about an hour's time, Bradley invaded my seclusion again, bringing something in the shape of a rough and ready supper on a tray. Though I felt equal to moving about a little now, I begged him to wheel the table over to the couch, for I thought it just as well he should rest under the impression that I was still too weak to rise.

When he had gone, and I was free from observation, I sat up and turned my attention to the supper tray. The fare, homely as it was, proved none the less acceptable. I made a good hearty meal, considering all things; and then, feeling decidedly better, proceeded to examine the room with stealthy, cat-like tread.

The result of my inspection threw me back upon my difficulties again. Both the windows were heavily barred on the outside, and all hope of escape by the door was out of the question. I returned to the couch, satisfied that there was nothing for it but to wait the issue of events.

Shortly after eleven o'clock, Bradley made his appearance for the last time that night. He brought in a couple of coarse rugs under his arm, which he flung down on me as if I were nothing more than a log. Then he turned and picked up the tray.



"If you refuse you will find a resting-place in one of those pits out there."

"You will leave me the lamp, I suppose?" I ventured to ask.

"Um—yes," he said, though he looked at it doubtfully for a moment or two. As he retired, I heard him lock the door and take away the key. A little later his

Away we went, across the bleak, brown moor in this race of life and death.

heavy step sounded overhead; and as I had seen the other man pass through the hall on his way upstairs when Bradley last entered the room, I felt assured that I was now the sole occupant of the ground floor.

Left alone for the night, I turned the lamp down, tucked the rugs round me, and set myself to look the situation straight in the face. It was unquestionably an ugly and embarrassing one. On the one hand, I was asked to forge an official order, and for the purpose of setting free a criminal, who, for all I knew, might make use of his liberty to commit some murderous outrage, by way of revenge or otherwise. On the other, if I stood out, there was the certainty of my being dragged from this house in the early morning—gagged and bound, most likely—and flung to the bottom of one of those deep, slimy Dartmoor pits, which have been the scene of many a dark and secret tragedy. Those were the two alternatives which confronted me; and I saw no middle course, no possible way of escape.

I cannot say that I came to any definite decision, then and there; I still grappled with the problem, hoping that I might yet hit upon some means of frustrating the designs of these men, without drawing their vengeance down upon me. But at the back of my mind there was a fixed and unalterable resolve that no pressure they could bring to bear would induce me to comply with their demands. At the last moment, even when death stared me in the face, something might crop up to turn the tide in my favour.

It was not until the night was far advanced, and I had spent long and harassing hours in racking my brains without avail, that hope began to slip gradually away from me, like a rope from a drowning man.

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Unable to bear up any longer, I sank into the depths of gloomy despondency. The dead, boding silence; the consciousness that I was absolutely cut off from the outer world; above all, the knowledge of what awaited me in the morning, sent my heart down as if weighted

There on the doorstep stood Eva herself.

with lead. At last, worn out by that protracted and anxious vigil, I fell into a broken, fitful slumber.

When I awoke, and all the dark forebodings which had haunted me throughout the night came crowding back, the lamp was still burning dimly. My watch showed me that it wanted but a few minutes to five o'clock. I reckoned that those men upstairs would not be stirring for another hour or two, so that a brief respite remained to me. The time was short, yet—— Great Heavens! I had it!

As I lay there on the couch, staring at the lamp with dismal concentration, a thought came to me, which was almost like the flash of an inspiration. In an instant, palpitating with feverish eagerness, I was on my feet, for there was not a moment to lose. Fumbling for my matches, I lit a candle which I found on the mantel piece, and then turned to the lamp again. For in the lamp lay my one and only chance of escape!

With a puff, I extinguished the flame, removed the globe and chimney, and proceeded to screw off the top. Thank Heaven! There was a small quantity of oil still left. Taking hold of the shank, I tiptoed softly across the room, and saturated the door with paraffin, especially in the neighbourhood of the lock. Then I struck another match.

Pop! It was the sudden burst of flame as the oil caught fire. I stood back, watching, with breathless, concentrated intentness, those fiery tongues as they licked their way up the wood, like so many willing agents, eager to effect my deliverance. I knew it was a conflict between them and time, and was kept in the throes of agitated suspense.

For a few anxious moments I doubted whether the fire would take hold, but I soon saw from the charred appearance of the wood that it had got its grip. Still, it made slow progress at first; and I was on thorns lest the smoke or smell of burning paraffin should arouse the men upstairs. Every second I expected to be startled by a thump and rush overhead, and hear Bradley thundering down to intercept my escape.

It seemed to me hours before the fire had eaten away the wood round the lock; but at last, as I drove my foot against it, the socket fell out, and the blazing door yawned open of its own accord. Another moment and I was in the hall; clawing, with trembling fingers, at the bolts and chain of the front door.

Oh, Heavens! what a thrill went through me when this last obstacle was overcome, and the raw, cold Dartmoor air, free and invigorating, struck upon my bare brow! Without an instant's delay I pattered down the neglected strip of garden, slipped through the little wicket at the end, and sped away across the moors.

It was still dark, though there was a cold, greyish glimmer in the sky, which enabled me to steer clear of obstacles in my path, and maintain my headlong flight. I had only got to a short distance, however, when a shout—or rather a regular bellow of rage—came across to me from the house. My head went round over my shoulder as I ran; and there, standing at the door in his shirt-sleeves, was Bradley, menacing me with his huge, extended fist. For a second, the face of the other man showed up behind him, but he darted back instantly into the house; while Bradley, half-dressed as he was, set off after me like some raging beast that had its quarry in view.

Away we went, across the bleak, brown moor, in this race of life and death. From the first I recognised, with a sinking heart, that the chances were dead against me. Weakened by all I had passed through, I was no match in point of speed for my vigorous pursuer. Soon—all too soon—I heard his hard, wicked pants in the darkness behind me; and could tell even without turning my head, that he was gaining on me at every stride. Bracing myself for one last, desperate effort, I struggled on blindly, recklessly, dreading to feel the ruffian's detaining clutch on my shoulder at any moment. And then—Oh, horror!—just as I thought there was still some feeble chance of shaking him off, a dark figure seemed to rise out of the ground straight in front, and bore swiftly down upon me. With a choking cry I gave in; my leaden arms dropped to my sides, and I stopped short on the spot.

But, instead of making for me, the man, whoever he was, went by like a flash. A moment or two later I heard the thud of a blow in the rear, a savage oath, and a snarl like that of a fierce brute brought to bay. The next second they were at it, tooth and nail, those two men; while I, weak and spent, flopped down on the damp soil, and sat there gasping for breath.

The fight which was going on in the dimness near me was fierce enough while it continued, as the state of the ground amply testified when I came to examine it afterwards. But it did not last long. Looking round, I saw that one of the men was already down, and from the patch of white shirt I knew that it was Bradley. The stranger, digging his knees into the ruffian's chest, and gripping him by the throat with one hand, raised the other to his lips and sent forth a shrill whistle.

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In answer to the signal, two or three men came running across the moor from different directions, and between them they soon had Bradley securely bound. The conqueror then rose up, and came over to the spot where I sat. Looking up at him as he approached, something in his tall, athletic figure struck me as familiar, and the next second I had recognised him.

"Barrington!" I exclaimed, joyfully; for it was none other than my big friend Jack himself.

"So we've got you at last, old fellow!" he cried. "We've been out on the moors all night hunting for you. Come, let me give you a hand up. Now, what the dickens does all this mean?"

"It's too long a story to tell you just now," I said. "But how did you get on my track?"

"Manton staggered home last night, a pretty sight! He was bleeding, coated with mud from head to foot, and seemed to be half-dazed. With some difficulty we got out of him a confused account of what had happened. We set off for the scene, a lot of us, found that the mare had dashed into a hedge, splintered one of her forelegs, and smashed the trap to atoms. You, my dear fellow, must have been shot out into the adjoining field, but we could find no trace of you. We organised a search party on the spot, and very luckily came in this direction towards morning. Hullo! what's that?"

"What?" I asked, looking round.

"That blaze over yonder."

"It's the house!" I cried. "The house where I was a prisoner! They shut me up in one of the lower rooms, and to get out I had to burn down the door. The fire has evidently spread."

"I'll have a look," said Barrington, quickly. "You wait here till I get back."

Calling to one of the men who were guarding Bradley, they started off together at a run, making straight across towards the burning building. They soon returned, however, to say that the house was doomed. Nor could they discover a soul about the place. The second man had evidently slipped away; probably having pressed into service the smart roan which Bradley had driven on the previous evening.

As there was nothing further to detain us, Barrington gave directions regarding the prisoner; and then, slipping his arm through mine, led me away. Somewhere about eight o'clock on that Christmas morning we approached Coombe-Leigh; and there, on the doorstep, stood Eva herself, very much relieved, apparently, to see me turn up at last, and showing evident traces of an anxious and sleepless night. I fear that I am open to the charge of having traded on her sympathy; for whereas the little rogue had hitherto backed out of naming the day, I found her more amenable to my intreaties on the present occasion, and this important date was definitely fixed before my visit came to an end.

It was not until I had returned to town that I learnt what Lattimer wished to convey to me as the train was steaming off. It seems he had heard, in a roundabout way, that some stranger had been making inquiries regarding me, especially with a view to ascertaining my probable movements about Christmas time. He remembered this just as he was leaving the station, and rushed back to try and put me on my guard; being convinced that the man we noticed on the platform was the very individual in question.

If only his memory had been a little more retentive!

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PART II. READY FEBRUARY 14.

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The Little Green Badge.

To any man who chances to be enslaved by the wiles of a coquette, I would offer the following advice:

Never permit her to guess that you are jealous, and, above all, do not tax her with fickleness.

Perhaps Harry Mallory had never received this sage warning, or else disregarded it, for he made the stupendous mistake of upbraiding his *fiancée* for heartlessness.

Standing before her with stern brows he said, dictatorially:

"Your manner indicates that you care no more for me than for a dozen other men. Gad! You distribute your favours most generously."

The girl looked up with a saucy flash of her sea-blue eyes.

"There is safety in numbers," she said lightly.

"Both safety and peril," he answered.

"Do sit down," she urged. "You look most uncomfortable standing in that rigid attitude." She was lounging on a divan among a nest of gorgeous cushions.

"Doris," the man said sternly, "trifle no longer. If you wish to break with me, let it be done."

The commanding tone would have roused the girl's anger had not the note of pain in his voice touched her woman's heart.

"What a silly boy!" she laughed, leaning forward and catching at one of his hands. "Tell me this, wise dictator, if I do not prefer you to all other men why am I betrothed to you?"

"You only know," he said bitterly. "I cannot understand it."

"I wouldn't be, had I known you possessed a jealous nature," she said, relinquishing his captive hand, and sinking back among the cushions.

"I am not jealous," he protested.

"Oh! What then?"

"I simply desire to understand your position towards me, which is becoming somewhat uncertain."

The girl clasped her hands behind her head and leaning back farther still, smiled broadly up in his face.

Harry trembled with impotent rage and love.

"You are absolutely heartless!" he cried.

"Then it is you who have deceived me," she answered sweetly, "for you said *your* heart was mine."

"But your own—" he stammered, feeling worsted in the skirmish, "I meant——"

"Oh, that was given into your keeping long ago!" cheerfully.

Harry capitulated. He sank down on the rug at her feet and buried his dark head in her billowy gown.

"Ha, ha! you surrender," she laughed, and stroked his hair. "Listen, dear," seriously. "You must have confidence in me or we shall be most unhappy. Now I have no desire to wound you, yet it seems I do so unwittingly. If you could only convey to me in some way that my actions were displeasing to you I might immediately cease whatever I chanced to be engaged in at the time. For instance, if I were dancing with Dan Clement, whose step suits mine so perfectly, and I caught your signal, I would immediately desert him. If I were playing an accompaniment for the new tenor, who sings so divinely, I would leave the piano, or, if I chanced to be singing myself, I would instantly close my mouth like a bivalve."

"Don't be absurd," Harry said, in a smothered voice.

"But I really wish to please you. I have no interest in other men, yet neither do I feel an aversion towards them since my betrothal to you. See here!" with a sudden idea.

Taking from the paraphernalia depending from her girdle a tiny knife, she unlaced a narrow green ribbon from its network on one of the cushions, and severed a small portion. This she tied in a bow, and raised her lover's face that he might view it. "Now you take this little badge which shall be a sign of jealousy, and whenever I am making you unhappy by my behaviour, attach it to your coat. This will admonish me to relinquish whatever amusement I may be engaged in at the time."

"What nonsense is this?" Harry inquired.

"I am quite serious. At any time that you display this little badge I promise to at once desist from my diversion of the moment."

"But I am never jealous," Harry insisted, flushing.

"Then you need never use it. But take it—put it in your waistcoat pocket, and if I ever should chance to make you jealous, pin it on your coat, and I will see it and end your discomfiture immediately. I will bend this little pin and catch it so it will be ready to hook on. Now put it in your pocket, and let us go on to the Mostyns'. They will think we are spooning on the way."

Two hours later Harry was again disturbed by observing his *fiancée* seated in a cosy corner with Jack Arden,

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a lady-killer, and apparently drinking in with delight all his dulcet flatteries. Jack ground his teeth and soliloquised.

"How can she permit him to gaze into her eyes like that? What can she find to laugh at in his gabble?

"Why does she clasp her hands round her knees in that coquettish manner? The cad is looking down at her slippers. I believe she dropped her handkerchief purposely. The impudence of him to inhale the odour of it as he picks it up!

"Great Heavens! Now he is holding her hand under pretence of palmistry. This is too much. Gad, I can't stand that! Why is she glancing at me? I thought she had forgotten my existence. Ha! She is looking for the little green badge. No wonder she thought it might be forthcoming. But no, missy, I am not jealous. You are making a fool of yourself—that's all.

"I'll walk off to the other room and watch the billiards. Perhaps that will bring her to her senses.

"I wonder what they are doing now? I may as well go leisurely back and glance that way.

"Jove! That looks well for an engaged girl—heads almost touching! They never missed me. What's he doing—mooning over her hand yet? Perhaps he is holding both by this time. Gad! if he isn't pretending to compare them! Every one has strayed away and left them quite alone. I've a great mind to take him by the nape of the neck and drop him over the bannister. I could easily do it—I'm three times his size. How the light glints on her yellow hair from the lamp over their heads!

"Ah! he has noticed it and is flattering her about it. What? Is the fellow going to touch it? No, she has drawn her head back out of his reach. I should hope so! She is looking for the badge again. I trust she is satisfied by this time that she can't make me jealous. If that fellow hasn't the nerve of a Napoleon. I believe he is trying to hypnotise her, else why does he lean forward in that engrossing manner, gazing into her eyes? Gad! It's time that tom-foolery came to an end. Where's that little green fol-de-rol? Anything to cook your goose, Jack Arden! Ha! she sees it—she has left him—but she isn't coming this way. I'll take it off. Now Dan Clement has secured her for a waltz. That will last as long as the music holds out. Dan looks idiotically enraptured. I'll soon stop his fun.

"Ahem! I thought so. She has excused herself. But she is no sooner out of the clutches of one than another man monopolises her. That insufferable tenor is dragging her to the piano that he may warble love-songs to her. When he gets fairly under way I'll cut him off short. Ha, ha! There's some amusement in wearing this little green bow after all. Next! What now? She's coming towards me."

"I would like to go now, Harry, if you don't mind."

"Certainly," he replied, in fiendish glee. "I am quite ready."

When they were in the carriage she spoke again.

"So you found use for the little green badge, after all?"

"Yes, I rather amused myself with it."

"You have a very queer expression on your face when you are amused! I have discovered to-night that you object to my conversing, dancing, or accompanying a singer on the piano. I should say that as your wife I should have rather a dull time. Harry, I have decided that I cannot marry a jealous man."

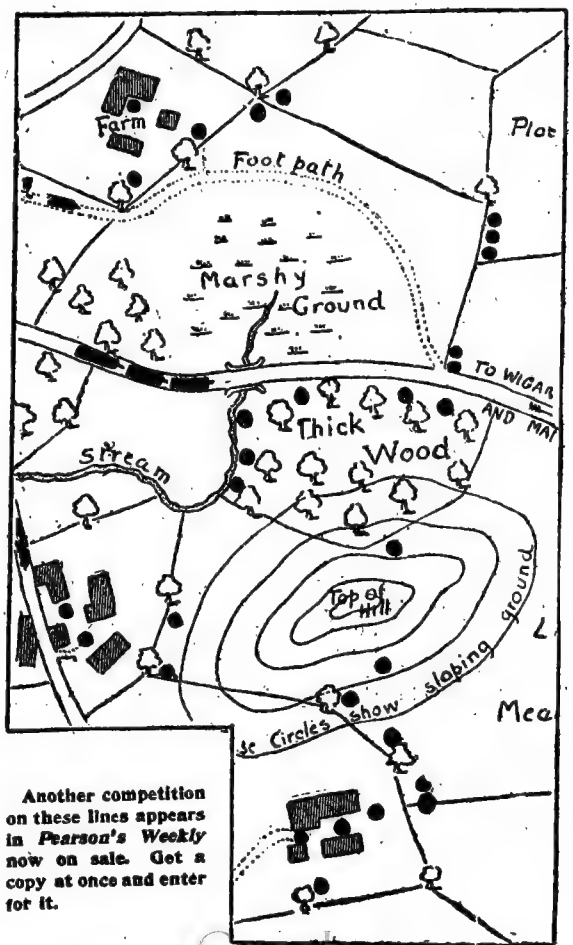
So Doris married a man who wasn't jealous, and now she has discovered, too late, that an unjealous lover often makes an indifferent husband. Landis Ayr.

Result of First "Pearson's Weekly" Sharpshooters' Competition.

The first prize of £10 has been awarded to Mr. L. Jekyll Duff, 1 Colville Square, Bayswater, W., who placed his thirty men in the best positions. The Columbia Graphophone has been awarded to Major R. Beatty, The County Club, Bray, Co. Wicklow, Ireland, and £1 each has been sent to the following: Mr. W. B. Scandrett, 2 Temple Street, Llandrindod Wells; Mr. J. White, 10 Gledhow Avenue, Roundhay, Leeds; Mr. P. F. Brian, 49 Old Clare Street, Limerick, Ireland; Mr. F. Fisk, 88 Folds Road, Bolton, Lancashire; Mr. H. Osborne, Dulce Domum, Clive Avenue, Hastings.

The above awards have been made in accordance with the key map published below, and prepared by Major Arthur Griffiths, whose reasons for placing the men (represented by black spots) are given here:

The problem "bars" the top of the hill, but the lower slopes should be held by riflemen under cover. The enemy has got so far along the Wigan-Manchester road that it is essential he should be met by a sharp fire directly his column crosses the stream on the road. He would believe then that the front was held in force, and seek to deploy to right and left across the open. His left is complicated by the march, so he would seek rather to open out on the right, and this necessitates the occupation of the villages and the ground on that side.



Another competition on these lines appears in *Pearson's Weekly* now on sale. Get a copy at once and enter for it.

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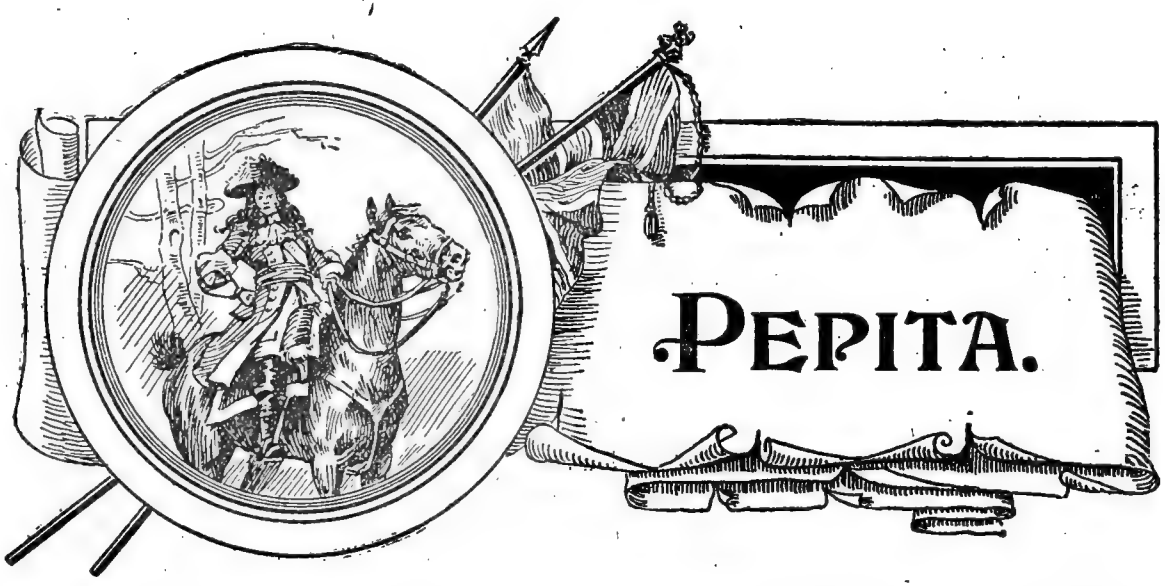

PEPITA.

THERE were two letters awaiting Harrison when he came home that evening; one an official-looking affair in a long envelope with a type-written address, and the other in a blue-tinted covering with a dainty superscription.

He had had many letters before that looked just as these did, and smiled as a man will when he receives one from his sweetheart and his best friend at the same time.

He opened his friend's letter first and read it standing, holding the blue one between his fingers meanwhile. The letter he was reading was long, and he stopped once or twice and looked at the blue envelope and then went on again.

The type-written epistle was from Burnham, who had been his great chum at college, and who was now putting his collegiate training into practice in building a dam at a little town called Santilla, in Mexico. The two friends had corresponded at regular intervals ever since leaving college, and in this last letter Burnham was trying to induce Harrison to come out to Mexico and join him.

Harrison smiled as he read the last sheet, and laid the letter down without returning it to its envelope, then opened the missive from his *fiancee* to find that she no longer considered herself as such. The letter was nothing if not short and to the point.

> "You have grossly deceived me, and you may consider our engagement—in fact, our acquaintanceship—at an end. Do not be so presumptuous as to try and see me; I shall not be at home to *you* at any time."

The "you" in the last clause was underscored, and the note simply signed with an initial.

Harrison was dumfounded, and stood for a moment holding the blue paper loosely between his fingers.

He realised in a swift retrospect of his past life that it was about as murky as that of most men of his class, although since his engagement he had given up that sort of thing. Still, he could think of no special act of his that could possibly have come to her notice and prejudice her against him, and the letter he had just received angered him.

Moreover, he resented her forbidding him to call and explain matters. He reflected, as he walked up and down the room with his hands in his pockets and his forehead wrinkled perplexedly, that she flattered herself when she thought he would attempt to see her after a dismissal of this kind.

The more he thought of it the greater was his desire to shake off the whole business, to go away somewhere, and his eyes happening on the other letter lying beside the long yellow envelope, the invitation contained in its pages seemed as welcome now as it had been out of the question five minutes before.

Three weeks later found Harrison at Santilla, where he was comfortably housed with Burnham in an old adobe house owned by a Mexican named Pedro Sanchez.

Burnham had lived here nearly a year, in fact, it was about the only house in the village that was suitable.

Pedro's family consisted of his daughter, Pepita, and himself, the former attending to the household duties, and the latter gaining a livelihood by any means whatsoever, so long as he did not have to work.

At first sight Harrison sized up the old Mexican for the disreputable old thief that he was, which conjecture was afterwards confirmed by Burnham, and his next thought was one of wonder that Pepita could come of such blood.

She was sixteen and superb, with straight, lithe form, fully developed, though so young, glossy black hair and glorious black eyes—eyes that are found most often under a tropical sun, and that made Harrison forget to release her hand, which he had shaken in the English fashion, as he looked into them.

He decided on the spot that he was going to like Pepita, which was not so strange, as she was the redeeming feature of the bad impression he had got of Santilla at first sight, which reminded him of the Italian quarter of his own city, only it was worse.

There were two other men from England associated with Burnham in the work on the dam, but they lodged with the station agent at Concho and rode over and back each day on their bronchos. Harrison wondered why Burnham did not follow their example instead of living in an old adobe house with two Mexicans. At first he was inclined to suspect him—Pepita was so

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beautiful—but put the thought from him at once, knowing his friend as he did.

Besides, he had no reason to suspect Pepita of being anything but a good woman, although almost too attractive.

He began to like his new life as he became more accustomed to it, and although thoughts of a woman away at home came to trouble him sometimes he found it more and more easy day by day, as the tropical sun got into his blood, to forget.

Each evening, after the work on the dam was over and they had eaten supper, the three men were wont to play cards, set-back usually, although occasionally they indulged in a mild game of draw-poker, with five cent limit. In the latter even old Pedro used to warm up more than was customary.

Pepita usually watched them, sitting on a straight chair with her chin in her hands and her elbows resting on the table. Her usual position had been at the end of the table opposite Burnham, but after Harrison came she sat at the corner next to her father, where she could look into Harrison's face as they played.

Oftentimes, on looking up waiting for a play, he found her black eyes on him, and would smile at her.

He noticed, also, that Burnham, when not engaged in play, looked steadfastly at Pepita, and he wondered.

On coming to Santilla, he told Burnham frankly his reason for leaving home, knowing him to be worthy of the confidence.

As the days went by, somehow he could not help but think that Burnham was more interested in Pepita than he would care to admit, and, on the other hand, from the way she looked at him across the card table each night, he was egostistical enough to believe that the girl was beginning to care for him. It tickled his vanity to think that she should prefer him to Burnham, although he told himself emphatically that he would give her no encouragement to do so.

One afternoon, however, matters came to a crisis between the two, quite unexpectedly to him, if not to her.

Burnham sent Harrison over to the house for some papers, and the latter on arriving at the house found Pepita standing in the doorway, and as he dismounted asked her where her father was.

"Gone over to Concho," she answered, placing her hands against the sides of the doorway.

Harrison made a movement as if to enter, but Pepita still held her hands in the same position without moving.

"Won't you let me come in?" he asked.

The light of coquetry was dancing in her eyes as she looked at him, and her lips were half parted in a smile.

"The señor is so strong—I could not stop him," she replied, yet did not move.

Harrison came up close to her, smiling. He knew she wished him to make her move, although he did not realise the possible effects of her fascination.

He took hold of her wrists, still smiling into her eyes, and took them down, holding them firmly, yet gently, and then—he could not tell afterwards how it was done—her face was close to his and he could see her eyes smiling as he kissed her full, red lips.

It was a kiss unlike any he had ever experienced before, for the Mexicans kiss from the heart. Having tasted, it seemed as though the tropical sun had entered into his blood, and slipping his arms round her he held her lithe body to him and kissed her again and again until she broke from him and ran to her room, while Harrison hurriedly gathered up the papers he had been sent for and rode back to the dam, where he acted so queerly for the rest of the day that Burnham began to think the sun had affected his head.

That night the men played cards as usual, except that Pepita, with the perversity of a woman, took her old position where she could watch Burnham. The latter noticed her action and was puzzled, thinking Harrison and the girl must have quarrelled, which thought was strengthened by the former's queer behaviour in the afternoon, so he watched them both narrowly for some sign.

But Harrison acted as usual and Pepita watched the game without comment, as was her custom, although occasionally she stole a side-long glance at Harrison when she thought Burnham was not looking.

When the men had finished playing, however, and Burnham and her father had gone out to look after the horses, she came over to Harrison and slipped her arms round his neck, while he, in defiance of the good resolutions he had been making all the evening to the contrary, drew her shapely head down and caressed her.

He was five thousand miles from home and lonely, he told himself.

So the days passed, Harrison vowing all day during his work at the dam to do differently, only to hopelessly surrender when alone with Pepita under the fascination of her eyes.

After the day's work was over, she always found an opportunity to be alone with him, if only for a moment, and her good-night kiss became as much of a certainty as the game of cards it always followed.

At length a day came when the heat was so intense that work was stopped on the dam and the two men came home before noon. The shelter of the house was very welcome, and after dinner, followed by a bath in the portable bath tub that Burnham had rigged up, the two lay down to cool off—Burnham on the bed in his room, and Harrison in the living room on an old stretcher that Pedro at some time or other had filched from the railway company.

Pepita darkened the house as much as was possible without cutting off what little air there was moving, and stepped noiselessly about busy with her household duties.

These finished, she sat down in the room where Harrison was sleeping. Old Pedro had gone over to Concho despite the heat.

Pepita knew by her lover's measured breathing that he was sleeping, although his form showed indistinctly in the half darkness. His arm was lying over the side of the stretcher, and a beam of light from a crack in the wall near the floor illumined the white skin and blue veins that showed above the sun-burnt wrist.

She stole softly over to him and, kneeling down, gently raised his arm on to the stretcher, then touching her lips lightly to the white skin laid her head against it—she loved him with all her heart.

He moved slightly as though her touch had disturbed him and she slipped back to her seat, fearing to wake him.

There she fell into a reverie. How she loved this blue-eyed, fair-haired, laughing señor—the first she

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had really loved; although so many had wooed her. She loved Señor Burnham also, she thought, but in such a different way, more as she did her father—the father who had always been good to her, though people called him bad.

As she mused, there came to her for the first time the terrifying thought that she might sometime lose him. Perhaps he was betrothed to some woman in far-away England, and was only trifling with her!

The thought of it started her to her feet trembling, and she clenched her hands. But her love for him came to the rescue, blind as a woman's love always is. There was a difference in their stations, of course, she thought, yet in some way she knew it would come right, so she sat in darkness with her hands clasped over her knees and built the airy castles that were so soon to come tumbling down.

As she sat there in deep thought, there came dragging its loathsome length through a crack in the adobe wall that pest of the American continent, a rattlesnake.

On it came across the floor until it was just opposite the head of the stretcher, when Harrison moved uneasily in his sleep, and his arm dropped down again in the ray of sunlight and swung slowly.

The movement alarmed the snake and the sound of its rattles rang out shrilly as the reptile threw itself into a coil. The warning sound woke Pepita from her reverie. She could see nothing clearly in the darkness except the white arm that was swaying but she realised the danger, and, crossing the room with an action as quick as the thought that prompted it, knelt protectingly in front of the stretcher just as the ugly head struck out of the darkness, burying its fangs in her hand.

"*Madre di Dios!*" she gasped under her breath as she felt the sting, and the snake struck her again—this time in her shoulder through the thin dress.

Then her senses came back to her, and groping blindly in the dark with her uninjured hand, she seized the reptile's neck, and with superhuman strength crushed its life out, as it lay with its fangs entangled in her dress, where it had struck a third time.

All through this, with the exception of a slight outcry when the snake first struck, she had made no sound. Something seemed to tell her to do this for the man she loved so silently that he would not waken, and Harrison, after stirring slightly when she cried out, slept quietly through it all.

At length she rose. The poison was working through her veins, and her brain reeled so that she almost fell as she bent over the man she had saved.

She laid her head down on his shoulder for a moment, and, as though he had dreamt it, his arm slipped round her neck. For a second she stayed in his embrace, and then, disengaging herself softly, she kissed him lightly on the lips—as lightly as the mother kisses the babe she fears to wake—and left him.

At the door she paused for a moment, and looked back into the darkened room, then with a gasp that was almost a sob forced her way out into the sunshine.

She tried to close the door after her but her strength was failing, and she could not, so she left it open with the bright sunlight streaming into the room.

After a time Burnham came, and went over to Harrison and shook him.

"Come on, lazy!" he said. "It's time to wake up."

Harrison sat up rubbing his eyes.

"I have had the queerest dream, Burnham," he added. "I dreamt that Pepita——"

Old Pedro stepped in just then and he stopped. The Mexican held a telegram in his hand.

"For you, señor," he said, handing it to Harrison.

"I'll be back in a minute to see what it says," said Burnham, surmising that the message was from home, and went out.

Harrison tore off the yellow covering and read the slip. It was from his sweetheart at home, and read:

"I misjudged you, Dick. Come home."

It was signed simply "Mary," and he read it again to make sure. In that moment he was happier than he ever believed that a reconciliation with Mary could make him, and hurried out to tell Burnham the good news, knowing how glad his friend would be, but in his happiness giving not one thought to Pepita.

Hardly twenty yards away in the sage brush that surrounded the house he found Burnham—found him on his knees on the ground, rocking to and fro in the throes of an incontrollable grief, holding in his arm a shapeless, swollen form that had once been the beautiful Pepita whom he had loved.

Charles Russell Riley.

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The Opportunity of Zamia Leigh.

THE STORY OF AN UNDERSTUDY.

"I WILL not!"

"But why?"

"There is no need for me to be more explicit. I have no quarrel with either play or playwright, as I have said before; but if Zamia Leigh is to understudy me I throw up the part. That is my last word!"

"This is intolerable! I have ventured a small fortune on the production of this piece, and now, at the very last moment, when failure on your part to appear would virtually spell ruin for me, you deliberately propose to leave me in the lurch!"

"Well, I have told you, and, so far as I am concerned, there is an end of the matter."

"But what harm, in Heaven's name, has Zamia Leigh done *you*? I don't know a quieter, more inoffensive girl."

"I decline to discuss Miss Leigh's perfections or imperfections at this, or any other time."

"By Jove! you women are enough to drive a man out of the few senses you credit him with possessing," said Ewart Jaffray desperately, seizing his hat and making for the door. "I am going down to the theatre now, and shall expect a definite message from you before four o'clock this afternoon."

Annette Hope does not seem in the slightest degree disturbed or ruffled. She is tall, handsome, dark; the rich colouring of her skin, telling unmistakably of Spanish or Italian blood in greater or less proportion. The most distinguished actress of the day, she has had the ball at her feet for several seasons past, and now is in the position to dictate, not only to managers, but to the public, who, sooth to say, will not as a rule submit to the autocratic, save in the case of exceptional genius, and not always then, if genius presumes too liberally and abuses with too high a hand, its privileges and advantages.

The history of the new play in which Annette Hope was looked for—alike by the critics and the public generally—to out-do all her previous records, is somewhat peculiar.

Its writer was but a comparatively young man; his name, in fact, being absolutely unknown in literary circles, as also to the man in the street. Five years or more before the date of this story he had met Annette Hope at the house of some mutual friends, the impression on both sides being, from the very outset, of a decidedly fervid character, and ripening rapidly in the sun of each succeeding opportunity.

Cyril Chumley, barrister-at-law, and a literary student of no mean merit, was early imbued with an overmastering desire to write a play which should have in it such a woman's part as should, as created by his idol, lift her high above even the pedestal upon which she already stood. He had no thought of self in all this; the reputation which might, and, in the event of success, no doubt would accrue to himself, had no place in his sanguine anticipations of fame and reward. The woman he worshipped was his sole animating influence. Of course she knew it, for when did woman exist who was unconscious of a man's adoration? As naturally, of course, it pleased her, seeing that, according to her lights, she loved him.

Somehow the great piece was long in the writing; Chumley seeming never to be quite satisfied with it.

One day, about two months before her interview with Ewart Jaffray, she called upon Cyril at his chambers in the Temple. He was out, but had left in the littered evidence upon his desk, proof of hard and recent work. He had, indeed, that morning put the

"You deliberately propose to leave me in the lurch!"

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finishing touches to his play. An accomplished fact, it waited now but for the interpreter.

At any other time Annette Hope would have been eager to see that which was to bring about the crowning event of her life; but it so chanced that curiosity irresistibly prompted her to do more than glance at a note, in a woman's handwriting, lying invitingly open, and only half-concealed amongst the other papers.

There was not much in it (she had no nice scruples as to reading it); not enough, anyway, to account for the fit of furious spleen and jealousy to which it gave rise. It was just a few graceful words of thanks to Cyril Chumley for a kind act of his in recommending the writer for an engagement at the principal theatre in Edinburgh. It was signed "Zamia Leigh."

It was while, still with her back to the door, she held the letter in her hand, conning it, with contracted brow, for the third time, that Annette Hope was conscious of some one standing behind her. Turning sharply, she saw a slight figure, garbed in some soft clinging white stuff. The eyes which looked inquiringly into her own out of a face delicately small and very fair, were large and lustrous—almost too large indeed, for they appeared to dominate their owner's personality.

Annette Hope, although she had never set eyes upon the girl before, instinctively knew her to be Cyril Chumley's correspondent, and the knowledge made all the hot Southern blood within her rush madly to her brain and finger-tips.

Zamia, utterly innocent, as she knew herself to be, of offence as toward this indignant-eyed Juno, could not repress a look of timid surprise at the other's hostile attitude.

"Miss Zamia Leigh, I believe?"

"That is my name, certainly; but I fail to——"

"Are you in the habit, may I ask," interrupted the actress, "of accepting favours from, and of writing sweet little notes of gratitude, to Mr. Cyril Chumley?"

This with an assumption of the finest scorn, and in her best high tragedy manner.

"Really—I—do not know you!" said Zamia, roused out of her habitual gentleness; "neither am I aware by what right you, as a perfect stranger, put to me so insulting a question?"

"No? There may be a difference of opinion with regard to that perhaps." (Here the actress gathered up, with a grand gesture, her ample skirts). "Maybe, you have heard of me—my name is Hope—Annette Hope; and Cyril Chumley is an old and very dear friend of mine—that is all. I would merely, therefore, suggest" (with her fingers on the handle of the door) "that Miss Leigh should, for the future, be careful, very careful, not to write too many epistles of *this* kind, as possibly her motive in so doing, as also in paying undesirable morning visits to bachelor barristers, may be unhappily misconstrued—to her obvious detriment."

Before Zamia could clearly comprehend, much less reply to this caustic tirade, Annette Hope had left the room, shutting the door behind her.

Dropping into a chair Zamia burst into tears. Recovering somewhat after a while, but fearing that Cyril would return and find her in this state, she wrote him the following note, laying it where he could not fail to see it at once upon his arrival:

"Dear Mr. Chumley—

"I have decided not to leave London just at present. I am anxious about my father, whom I think you know is far from well. I shall, therefore, under these circumstances, not need your kind letter of introduction to Mr. Campbell in Edinburgh, and so I re-inclose it now, with many thanks for the trouble you took in the matter. I shall try for an engagement in town.

"Yours sincerely,

"Zamia Leigh.

"P.S.—I did not know Miss Annette Hope was a friend of yours."

When Cyril Chumley read Zamia's note he was puzzled at first as to its drift.

Then the true meaning of the postscript flashed upon him; light broke, and he reviled the fate which had made possible a meeting between these two.

Not once, up to this, had he wavered in his fealty to Annette; but shrewdly suspecting that with the predisposition to passionate injustice of her mother's race, she had wounded Zamia—wounded her sorely, and in a way that would make healing a matter of much difficulty, he experienced a revulsion, a change in his feeling towards her, which augured badly for love's continuance. With regard to Zamia his sentiments had been those of a big brother—nothing more; but it is certain now that he began to see her with different eyes. An inexplicable desire to shield her from Annette Hope's malevolency and spite, laid hold upon him with a strength and grip he could not shake off or resist.

The girl was, save for her father—whose state of health was such as to render him practically useless as a protection—alone in the world. She had been brought to the young man's notice by a theatrical friend, who fancied that she might perhaps fill a vacancy in the cast of *My Lady Penitent*.

Cyril Chumley, the first day he met her, saw latent talent in the girl, and the opportunity offering of a good opening in an Edinburgh theatre, he gave her his good word. Now, however, that events had taken this unexpected turn, he had no doubts as to what he ought to do—what, indeed, he ought to have done in the first instance.

Swayed by no other motive than a wish to advantage both himself and her, he pressed upon her the position of understudy to Annette Hope.

Zamia at first greatly feared to accept, but confident in her own powers, and relying upon Cyril's ability to "see her through," she consented, upon the one condition, that she should never at any time, whether at rehearsal or elsewhere, be brought into personal contact with her principal. As this was quite in accordance with Chumley's own ideas and wishes, strict silence in the matter was maintained, the understudy's identity remaining a mystery. That the secret ultimately leaked out, we know, with results fearfully disastrous to one woman, inasmuch as her fall contributed to the rise of that other upon whom she laid all the burden of that which really sprung from a reckless surrendering to her own ungovernable passions.

In the manager's office at the theatre two men sat anxiously discussing the situation.

Four o'clock went by and still no word from *The Prince's* leading lady.

"Jaffray," said Cyril Chumley, as the last silvery tinkle sounded from the little clock on the top of the bureau, "I have made up my mind! Zamia Leigh shall play 'Lady Susan'! If Miss Hope elects to sue us for breach of contract, I think, as a barrister, I know the law enough to be confident that the day would be ours."

Beyond a slight paleness there was nothing in either voice or manner which indicated mind disturbance or infirmity of purpose.

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"But, my dear fellow!" protested the other; "had we not better give her, say, an hour's grace. You see, she has been largely advertised, and she is so popular that I'm afraid we shouldn't come out of it with unbroken heads."

"Not half-an-hour! not five minutes!" said Cyril bitterly. "I have my reasons—strong reasons—for giving the part to Miss Leigh, and Annette Hope must look to herself. As to the other matter, we must at once issue counter notices and advertisements. Make them as emphatic as possible, and—leave the rest to me."

Ewart Jaffray and Cyril Chumley were old college intimates, and so, the former knowing much and suspecting more, of his friend's life-story, had his own private opinion with regard to this absolute change of front. This, however, he kept religiously to himself, betraying only by the faintest of smiles his suspicions as to the other's manifestly expressed interest in the fair young understudy.

An hour later, and when, Chumley long since gone, Ewart Jaffray had quite made up his mind that his enterprise must certainly be relegated to the limbo of the might-have-beens, a commissionaire brought him a laconic note:

"I have changed my mind. I *will* play Lady Susan *under existing circumstances*; you can make your arrangements.

"Annette Hope."

In less than ten minutes Jaffray burst into Cyril Chumley's workroom in Hare Court, Temple.

"Look here!" he cried excitedly, holding out to the other the actress' note.

"Well!" quietly remarked Chumley, and returning the paper. "What's the trouble? The lady is too late—that is all; a by no means unusual thing with the majority of her sex; that is, according to my experience."

"But of course you will not insist now upon Miss Leigh's playing the lead?"

"But, indeed, I most certainly shall, so, my dear Ewart, see to it that the announcements I suggested an hour ago in your room are issued without delay. Fortunately, Miss Leigh is, I know, both letter and business perfect. There is no reason, therefore, why the date of production should be postponed by so much even as a day."

"But just imagine, Chumley! She—Annette Hope, I mean—has got the whip hand of us—and will use it!"

"As I said before, I don't think so, and am therefore, prepared to take the consequences."

Ewart Jaffray, despite his admiration and regard for his friend, shrugged his shoulders in good-humoured semi-pathetic fashion, as being a trifle unconcerned on this point.

"You know," he said, "how I am situated in the matter. Every shilling almost I possess is staked on this venture. What am I to do if things go wrong?"

"They will *not* go wrong—take my word for it. I know Zamia Leigh's power, and what that power is worth and is capable of effecting. More, should disaster come, I will myself guarantee you against personal loss."

Cyril Chumley was a rich man, and could make this offer worth the accepting.

But the stiletto was not allowed to descend on its murderous errand.

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"Don't insult me, old man!" cried Ewart Jaffray, hastily. "Perhaps I am wrong—I hope I am. Anyway, I will at once announce our change of programme. Good-night! If I have belittled your judgment, forgive me. Good-night!"

The public were in no wise prepared for the substitution of an altogether untried novice (novice, that is, so far as the metropolis was concerned) for its favourite, and, in a way, resented it. Various were the critical and other comments in the Press and in clubrooms the town over.

It was as though our own Ellen Terry were, without good and sufficient reason publicly given, suddenly to throw up an important part on the eve of a great production.

In the present instance no explanation was vouchsafed, the published advertisements simply stating that the part of Lady Susan Strangeways, in Mr. Chumley's new play would, until further notice, be undertaken by Miss Zamia Leigh, her first appearance in London.

Far from affecting general interest in the new piece, expectation and curiosity were decidedly responsible for a marked increase in the desire to be present at the initial performance. It was rumoured that Annette Hope had left town for Paris, but beyond that (and even that was unprovable) nothing certain was known.

On the morning of the day of the opening Zamia received a note from Chumley, in which, after bidding her "good-speed," and giving her a few last words of encouragement and advice, he said: "I would like you to remember that, much as success will mean to you, to me it will mean more, *although* (and these concluding words she fancied to be somewhat tremulously written) *your success or failure will be alike to me in this, that Zamia Leigh will be Zamia Leigh still!*"

To read between the lines in matters of the heart is a woman's right and privilege, and certainly she is man's superior in both the method and the manner of it.

It needed, however, no expert to determine the real meaning of Chumley's words. Zamia instinctively knew that her hour had come; that the man who, ever since she had known him, had treated her with that kindliness and thoughtful gentleness, which in itself spoke volumes, was now more to her than all the world beside, as she to him.

For the moment the knowledge created a nervousness almost uncontrollable; but as the day wore on she became calmer, looking forward even with the indomitable fighting-spirit of the true artist to the now near-at-hand crisis of her life.

The curtain had gone up on the first act, and the house, crowded to its very fullest, had settled down to keenly critical consideration of piece and players.

Men's eyes and ears were, however, set to see and hear but one thing. Every movement of Zamia, every word she uttered was weighed in the balance, and, as time went on, found not only to be far from wanting, but to be certain to earn for the young provincial a very foremost place in the front rank of her profession.

Chumley was not in the theatre. Never at any time a man of much nerve, he was now pacing the embankment hard by, in no enviable state of mind.

Would Zamia fulfil his prophecy with regard to her? Of course she would. Should there be failure it would be his and his alone.

Then his thought went out to that other woman who, by her unreasoning jealousy and misdirected passion, had for ever torn herself out of his heart. Where was she, what was she doing? He might have had an answer to these questions had he but turned his head as a brougham passed close to the kerb.

The woman in it—an evil-eyed fury, with both jewelled hands convulsively clutching the top of the lowered window-frame, glared vengefully at him as the carriage whirled past, for, though his back was towards her, she knew his figure.

Presently, tired of watching the lamp-flecked river, and of hearing the lap-lapping of the water against the granite barrier, he moved to go up Savoy Hill into the Strand.

Reaching the theatre he passed unnoticed through the stage-entrance, and so on to the stage.

The curtain was down previous to the last act. Up to the present it had been a success, for both author and actress, all along the line.

There was yet five minutes of interval.

The stage was set for an elaborate conservatory scene, wonderfully painted and stage-managed.

The vista, which stretched to the extreme back of the stage, gave an impression from the front of illimitable distance of crystal, leafy beauty.

By a plashing fountain in the centre, shaded by luxuriant tropical plants, interspersed with fairy lights, sat Zamia, waiting the curtain's rise.

The orchestra was playing a dreamy waltz, peculiarly appropriate to the scene.

Behind a palm, at the right-hand second entrance, stood Chumley, watching Zamia, his eyes telling a love-tale impossible of misinterpretation.

What happened then, passed, as he has since said, with dream-like rapidity.

Raising his eyes he saw, gliding stealthily but swiftly down the green avenue from the back a woman wrapped to the feet in a long black domino.

Before he could think it out or comprehend the situation, the figure halted behind Zamia and, poising her hand, in which something glittered, a second, seemed as though about to strike the unconscious actress.

But the stiletto was not allowed to descend on its murderous errand.

The wrist, fast fixed in an iron grip, remained extended aloft; its owner unable to do more than hiss out her passionate disappointment. The stage, save for these three, was quite deserted; the leafiness, too, doing much to conceal this "play within a play."

"Miss Leigh," whispered Chumley, hoarsely and peremptorily, "leave the stage; don't return till you get your call!"

To Zamia it all seemed absolutely unreal; but she did as he bid her.

On her way to her room she met Jaffray, who asked the cause of her paleness and agitation.

"Come with me!" she wildly interrupted him. "Come!" almost dragging him in the direction of the stage.

"My dear Miss Leigh! The curtain will go up in a moment! What is it? I see nothing!"

Neither did she. The neighbourhood of the fountain, the whole stage even, was void of life.

"But—but I left them here!"

"Left them? Left whom?" somewhat impatiently queried Jaffray. "But tell me after the show, it's too late now." And as he swiftly left her side, the curtain rose, discovering her seated by the fountain side.

For the play, it need only be said, that it was an unqualified triumph for all concerned. Again and again was Zamia led out by Jaffray to receive the applause and congratulations of the house.

But the author—where was he?

No one knew; and so it was that the writer of the most successful play London had seen for years was apologised for as being absent.

Immediately before the commencement of the third and last act, the stage-doorkeeper saw Cyril Chumley, with a tall, black-cloaked lady, whom he fancied he recognised, upon his arm, pass out and enter a waiting brougham. The gentleman it was who gave the order "Home!" the carriage driving rapidly away westwards.

* * * * *

"You quite understand me?"

It was Cyril Chumley who spoke; as, standing by the table in Annette Hope's dining-room in her Duke Street flat, he looked sternly into the eyes of the woman who faced him, defiant and unabashed.

As she did not answer, he addressed her again.

"There is," he said, "no other course open to you. You are a rich woman, and to give up your profession and your home in England will be no hardship. That which you—and I—and—one other know, shall remain unknown to the world on this one condition only—that within twelve hours you leave London. I shall expect to receive a note from you by evening to-morrow dated from Dover (or, better still, a wire in the morning) to say that you are about to cross to France. I make no secret of my intention to marry Zamia Leigh, if she will have me; and I am vain enough to think that she will. Knowing you as I do, I conceive the knowledge of that fact to be part of your punishment, which, however, you have brought upon yourself, and for which you have no one but yourself to blame."

Up to this she had resolutely, though with difficulty, kept silence.

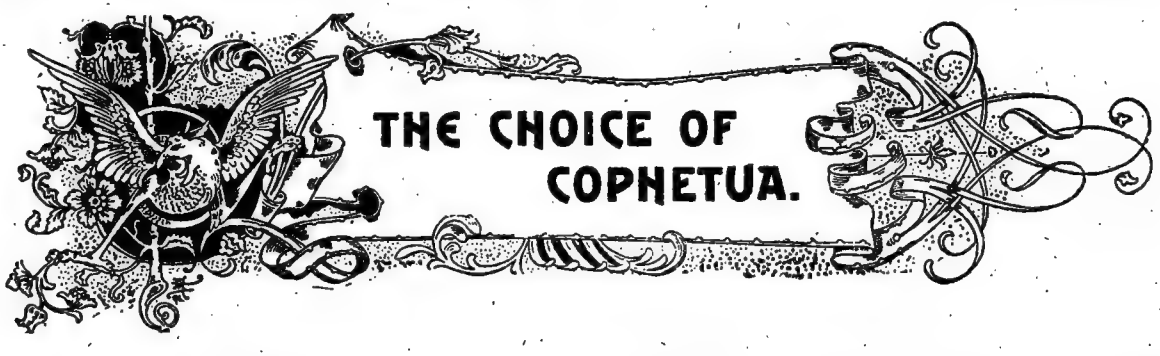
Now she spoke.

"I *will* go! for, like a coward, you hold me down—and—I cannot help it; but to say that it was *I* who began it all. *I!* is a lie!"

She closed her eyes in the intensity of her passion, as she blazed out the word.

When she opened them again, prepared to launch at him the uttermost of which she was capable—he was gone!

Ralph Enderby.



"Shall you marry him, Nora?"

"It's manners to wait to be asked," returned Nora.

"Hasn't he asked you?" persisted Will Cable.

"That would be telling," Nora Marsh replied.

Then she laughed up at the young giant leaning over the back of the armchair and regarding her with a look at once quizzical and puzzled. He was just as gentle, as retiring, as shy as ever. And yet the world had great things to say of his wisdom, his indomitable pluck in the face of distressing obstacles, the lofty scientific value of his researches and discoveries. He had been interviewed and lauded. The critics were unanimous in his praise. And here he was, back in the beloved, book-lined old room where they had quarrelled as children—just the same delightful fellow of five years before.

"I suppose you know we're awfully proud of you, Will," she said. She had been watching him dreamily, trying to fancy that powerful, cropped, dark head adorned with the soft waves of the lad who used to be so careful of his personal appearance when he was home from college on his vacations. "I keep telling people what great friends we were when we were young. I don't say a word about the torture you made me suffer when you kidnapped the doll."

"You may not happen to remember, either, your revenge for that injury!"

"Oh, I do," she cried, and laughed out. "Indeed I do! You were taking Laura Miller to play tennis, and Bobby——"

"I have always thought the sense of humour in your small brother was inspired and developed by his sister. To accidentally turn the garden hose on a young man clad in the height of fashion, was a peculiar evidence of misdirected energy! Now, what are you——"

Carriage wheels had stopped before the door. They could hear the servant crossing the hall. "Mr. Reginald Raymond," announced the man.

Mr. Raymond, bland and placid, round-faced, round-eyed, hat in hand and monocle in eye, made his appearance. Was he too early? Was Miss Marsh ready? He had been assured the first act was unusually strong. Mr. ——; ah yes, Mr. Cable, to be sure. He had heard of Mr. Cable. Quite pleased to meet him! Was this Miss Marsh's cloak? Would she permit him? Good-evening, Mr. Cable!

Then Miss Marsh had taken up her bouquet, had gathered around her the folds of her opera-wrap of old-rose panne velvet, had sent a sweet, swift, mocking look at Cable standing deserted—and was gone.

But, although she heartily enjoyed the gay comedy to which they went, she had not the faintest idea of the comedy in which she played a wholly unconscious part. How could she dream that Reginald Raymond had

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finally decided to bestow upon her the inestimable honour of his favour? How could she suppose that after long deliberation he had come to the conclusion that upon her fair shoulders should fall the mantle of his princely preference? How could she—in her wildest moments of prophetic rapture—imagine that he, the heir to millions, the bright particular star of half-a-dozen seasons of ambitious mothers, had finally decided that she should rule his household, and shed lustre on his name?

He was making no rash decision. He repeatedly strengthened his heart by this reassurance, while they drove to the theatre, while he sat by her side at the play—was her *vis-à-vis* at supper. Her family was one of not only social but intellectual pre-eminence. Her father had been twice a Member of Parliament. Her brother had held a high diplomatic post abroad. Their friends were of the most exclusive. Their acquaintances were those of the cultured—the artistic world. To be sure, the Marshes had no money to spare. But—what was money to him? And when it came to grace and wit, and distinction, and beauty, and above all, that exquisite indefinable possession we call breeding—there was not a girl who might be mentioned in the same breath with her—no, by George! not one! And he would marry her—he would! He'd tell her so this very night.

He turned to study her again, and with pulses that quickened as he looked. Faultless of form, graceful as only a beautiful woman and a tigress can be, with features perfect as those cut on the silver coins of Syracuse, she was worthy the incense of men's homage—worthy the quite as precious glory of woman's jealousy! There was just a glimpse of creamy flesh through the meshes of Mechlin at arms and bosom. The eyes that looked out from under long, white lids, had the laughing loveliness of a child's. One fancied the full scarlet lips could be as scornful as they were sensitive—as passionate as they were sweet. And those who knew Nora Marsh knew the warmth her proud heart held, the brilliance her brain harboured, the gentleness which was as much a part of her divine power as her beauty itself! Yes, he was making a perfectly proper choice. Would she be overwhelmed to be selected as the bride of a millionaire? To have a mansion in the country, a town house in Park Lane? There was a charming castle on a blue Scottish moor he would buy for her if she fancied a sojourn in the land of the heather. As for jewels—he smiled again there. All women loved jewels. How many men could offer to the chosen companion of his life such rare gems as he?

But, while he found himself the envied of all men, sailing beside her down the Adriatic—he had almost fixed on the Adriatic for their wedding trip—he used his language as the sapient Frenchman divined—to conceal his thoughts.

"That Mr. Cable seems a fine sort of a fellow. No end of talk about him at the clubs. He is the lion of the hour, they say."

"Oh, we quite claim Mr. Cable at our house! His every honour is a personal triumph for us."

"So good of you to say so!" Raymond was nothing if not complacent. "He ought to be very much flattered!"

A queer little look flashed at him from under the curling dark lashes.

"It is we who are flattered, Mr. Raymond!"

His laugh was leniency itself.

"The extent of your charity is only being revealed to me! I wonder if I may—if I might—plead for mercy for myself!"

They were driving slowly homeward through the silence, the crispness, the blueness, of a perfect February night.

"You! What could the gods give you that you have not?"

He was conscious of the tremor that went through the slight frame. A sense of his supremacy shook him. He had been right, then! All his golden anticipations were to be realised. Not that he had doubted for a moment that any girl in her right mind would refuse him—Reginald Raymond! His arm slipped confidently round her waist.

"The gods could give me nothing—unless you were theirs to give!"

"Ah!" she said softly. She moved a little until she was free from his arm. "You—you are quite sure——"

That was just where Raymond's bad quarter of an hour began.

"Sure—indeed, yes! I have not spoken hastily. I have given the matter—a weighty one as you will admit—due consideration." He adjusted his monocle. He wished the coachman would drive more slowly. "I recollect of what I owe to my family, to my position, to—if I may say so—to myself!"

"Yes," sighed a tender voice. "Oh—yes!"

"And I have made up my mind that you are the only woman I shall marry—you!"

He could again feel the tremor of the slender shape near. He put out a fat little hand. His touch was not tentative by any means. It was determined. There was no false modesty about Raymond. In the gloom of the carriage he almost forgot the charm, the beauty, the power of the girl. All these were engulfed in his own superb condescension—a condescension of which she was aware. Her choking voice when she spoke proved that.

"And I have decided it is you—you whom I have chosen for—my wife!"

"You have——" How overwhelmed she was!—"not spoken rashly?"

"My mind," he declared heroically, "is irrevocably made up!"

"You are sure you will not regret——"

He cut short the faltering voice. "Your timidity is uncalled for, dear. I never change my mind. When shall it be?—confound that coachman!"

The carriage door swung back. Raymond walked with Miss Marsh up the steps.

"Don't come in!" she intreated sweetly. "I have an engagement. And—I'm very sorry, you know and very grateful for the honour, of course, but I don't care for you—that way. Thank you ever so much! Take care! There's been a frost! The steps are quite slippery. I've had a most enjoyable evening. Good-night—good-night!"

Then her cheeks scarlet, her lips apart, and breathing hard she was in the library—was facing a man who had risen from his low chair in the light of the dying fire.

"Well?" he questioned hoarsely. He came slowly towards her. "Well? He proposed to-night. I knew he would. Get it over for Heaven's sake! When is it to be? When are you to give yourself—your sweet self—to any man's arms?"

She went straight towards him. Her colour had suddenly gone. She was white as the roses she carried. And her cheeks were wet and shining in the firelight.

"Whenever you will take me!" she said.

Kate M. Cleary.

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A THOUSAND DEATHS.

I HAD been in the water about an hour, and cold, exhausted, with a terrible cramp in my right calf, it seemed as though my last hour had come. Fruitlessly struggling against the strong ebb-tide, I had beheld the maddening procession of the water-front lights slip by; but now I gave up attempting to breast the stream, and contented myself with the bitter thoughts of a wasted career, now drawing to a close.

It had been my luck to come of good, English stock, but of parents whose account with the bankers far exceeded their knowledge of child-nature and the rearing of children. While born with a silver spoon in my mouth, the blessed atmosphere of the home circle was to me unknown. My father, a very learned man and a celebrated antiquarian, gave no thought to his family, being constantly lost in the abstractions of his study; while my mother, noted far more for her good looks than her good sense, sated herself with the adulation of the society in which she was perpetually plunged.

I went through the regular school and college routine of a son of parents well-to-do, and as the years brought me increasing strength and passions, my parents suddenly became aware that I was possessed of an immortal soul, and endeavoured to draw the curb. But it was too late; I perpetrated the wildest and most audacious follies, and was disowned by my people, ostracised by the society I had so long outraged; and with the thousand pounds my father gave me, with the declaration that he would neither see me again nor give me more, I took a first-class passage to Australia.

Since then my life had been one long peregrination—from the Orient to the Occident, from the Arctic to the Antarctic—to find myself at last, an able seaman of thirty, in the full vigour of my manhood, drowning in San Francisco Bay because of a disastrously successful attempt to desert my ship.

My right leg was drawn up by the cramp, and I was suffering the keenest agony. A slight breeze stirred up a choppy sea, which washed into my mouth and down my throat, nor could I prevent it. Though I still contrived to keep afloat, it was merely mechanical, for I was rapidly becoming unconscious. I have a dim recollection of drifting past the sea-wall, and of catching a glimpse of an up-river steamer's starboard light; then everything became a blank.

I heard the low hum of insect life, and felt the balmy air of a spring morning fanning my cheek. Gradually it assumed a rhythmic flow, to whose soft pulsations my body seemed to respond. I floated on the gentle bosom of a summer's sea, rising and falling with dreamy pleasure on each crooning wave. But the pulsations grew stronger; the humming louder; the waves larger, fiercer—I was dashed about on a stormy sea. A great agony fastened upon me. Brilliant, intermittent sparks of light flashed athwart my inner consciousness; in my ears there was the sound of many waters; then a sudden snapping of an intangible something, and I awoke.

He was inexorable. He was not a father, but a scientific machine.

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The scene, in which I was chief actor, was a curious one. A glance sufficed to inform me that I lay on the cabin floor of some gentleman's yacht, in a most uncomfortable posture. On either side, grasping my arms and working them up and down like pump handles, were two peculiarly clad, dark-skinned creatures. Though conversant with most aboriginal types, I could not conjecture their nationality. Some attachment had been fastened about my head, which connected my respiratory organs with the machine I shall next describe. My nostrils, however, had been closed, forcing me to breathe through the mouth. Foreshortened by the obliquity of my line of vision, I beheld two tubes, similar to small hose but of different composition, which emerged from my mouth and went off at an acute angle from each other. The first came to an abrupt termination and lay on the floor beside me; the second traversed the floor in numerous coils, connecting with the apparatus I have promised to describe.

In the days before I had become a wanderer, I had dabbled not a little in science, and, conversant with the appurtenances and general paraphernalia of the laboratory, I appreciated the machine I now beheld. It was composed chiefly of glass, the construction being of that crude sort which is employed for experimentative purposes. A vessel of water was surrounded by an air chamber, to which was fixed a vertical tube, surmounted by a globe. In the centre of this was a vacuum gauge.

The water in the tube moved upwards and downwards, creating alternate inhalations and exhalations, which were in turn communicated to me through the hose. With this, and the aid of the men who pumped my arms so vigorously, had the process of breathing been artificially carried on, my chest rising and falling and my lungs expanding and contracting, till nature could be persuaded to again take up her wonted labour.

As I opened my eyes the appliance about my head, nostrils, and mouth was removed. Draining a stiff dose of brandy, I staggered to my feet to thank my preserver, and confronted—my father. But long years of fellowship with danger had taught me self-control, and I waited to see if he would recognise me. Not so; he saw in me no more than a runaway sailor, and treated me accordingly.

Leaving me to the care of the blackies, he fell to revising the notes he had made on my resuscitation. As I ate of the handsome fare served up to me, confusion began on deck, and from the chanteys of the sailors and the rattling of blocks and tackles, I surmised that we were getting under way. What a lark! Off on a cruise with my recluse father into the wide Pacific! Little did I realise, as I laughed to myself, which side the joke was to be on. Aye, had I known, I would have plunged overboard and welcomed the dirty fo'c'sle from which I had just escaped.

I was not allowed on deck till we had sunk the farallones and the last pilot boat. I appreciated this forethought on the part of my father, and made it a point to thank him heartily, in my bluff seaman's manner. I could not suspect that he had his own ends in view, in thus keeping my presence secret to all save the crew. He told me briefly of my rescue by his sailors, assuring me that the obligation was on his side, as my appearance had been most opportune. He had constructed the apparatus for the vindication of a theory concerning certain biological phenomena, and had been waiting for an opportunity to use it.

"You have proved it beyond all doubt," he said; then added with a sigh, "but only in the small matter of drowning."

But, to take a reef in my yarn—he offered me an advance of two pounds on my previous wages to sail with him, and this I considered handsome, for he really did not need me. Contrary to my expectations, I did not join the sailors' mess for'ard, being assigned to a comfortable state-room and eating at the captain's table. He had perceived that I was no common sailor, and I resolved to take this chance for reinstating myself in his good graces. I wove a fictitious past to account for my education and present position, and did my best to come in touch with him. I was not long in disclosing a predilection for scientific pursuits, nor he in appreciating my aptitude. I became his assistant, with a corresponding increase in wages; and before long, as he grew confidential and expounded his theories, I was as enthusiastic as himself.

The days flew quickly by, for I was deeply interested in my new studies, passing my waking hours in his well-stocked library, or listening to his plans and aiding him in his laboratory work. But we were forced to forego many enticing experiments, a rolling ship not being exactly the proper place for delicate or intricate work. He promised me, however, many delightful hours in the magnificent laboratory for which we were bound. He had taken possession of an unchartered South Sea Island, as he said, and turned it into a scientific paradise.

We had not been on the island long before I discovered the horrible mare's nest I had fallen into. But before I describe the strange things which came to pass, I must briefly outline the causes which culminated in as startling an experience as ever fell to the lot of man.

Late in life my father had abandoned the charms of antiquity and succumbed to the more fascinating ones embraced under the head of biology. Having been thoroughly grounded during his youth in the fundamentals, he rapidly explored all the higher branches so far as the scientific world had gone, and found himself on the no man's land of the unknowable. It was his intention to pre-empt some of this unclaimed territory, and it was at this stage of his investigations that we had been thrown together. Having a good brain, though I say it myself, I had mastered his speculations and methods of reasoning, becoming almost as mad as himself. But I should not say this. The marvellous results we afterwards obtained can only go to prove his sanity. I can but say that he was the most abnormal specimen of cold-blooded cruelty I have ever seen.

After having penetrated the dual mysteries of physiology and psychology, his thoughts had led him to the verge of a great field, for which, the better to explore, he began studies in higher organic chemistry, pathology, toxicology, and other sciences and sub-sciences rendered kindred as accessories to his speculative hypotheses. Starting from the proposition that the direct cause of the temporary and permanent arrest of vitality was due to the coagulation of certain elements and compounds in the protoplasm, he had isolated and subjected these various substances to innumerable experiments. Since the temporary arrest of vitality in an organism brought coma, and a permanent arrest death, he held that by artificial means this coagulation of the protoplasm could be retarded, prevented, and even overcome in the extreme states of solidification. Or, to do away with the technical nomenclature, he argued that death, when not violent and in which none of the organs had suffered injury, was merely suspended vitality, and that, in such instances, life could be induced to resume its functions by the use

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of proper methods. This, then, was his idea: To discover the method—and by practical experimentation prove the possibility—of renewing the vitality in a structure from which life had seemingly fled. Of course, he recognised the futility of such endeavour after decomposition had set in; he must have organisms which but the moment, the hour, or the day before, had been quick with life. With me, in a crude way, he had proved this theory. I was really drowned, really dead, when picked from the water of San Francisco Bay—but the vital spark had been renewed by means of his ærotherapeutical apparatus, as he called it.

Now to his dark purpose concerning me. He first showed me how completely I was in his power. He had sent his yacht away for a year, retaining only his two blackies, who were utterly devoted to him. He then made an exhaustive review of his theory and outlined the method of proof he had adopted, concluding with the startling announcement that I was to be his subject.

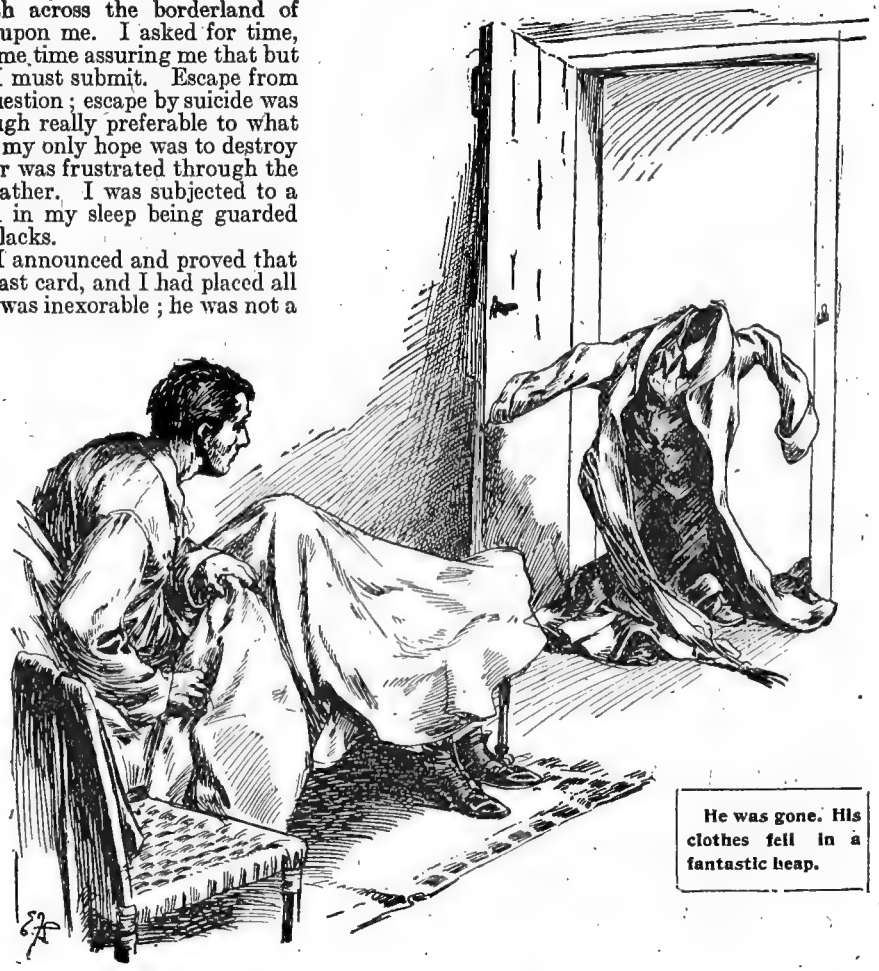
I had faced death and weighed my chances in many a desperate venture, but never in one of this nature. I can swear I am no coward, yet this proposition of journeying back and forth across the borderland of death put the yellow fear upon me. I asked for time, which he granted, at the same time assuring me that but the one course was open—I must submit. Escape from the island was out of the question; escape by suicide was not to be entertained, though really preferable to what it seemed I must undergo; my only hope was to destroy my captors. But this latter was frustrated through the precautions taken by my father. I was subjected to a constant surveillance, even in my sleep being guarded by one or the other of the blacks.

Having pleaded in vain, I announced and proved that I was his son. It was my last card, and I had placed all my hopes upon it. But he was inexorable; he was not a father, but a scientific machine. I wonder yet how it ever came to pass that he married my mother or begat me, for there was not the slightest grain of emotion in his make-up. Reason was all in all to him, nor could he understand such things as love or sympathy in others, except as petty weaknesses which should be overcome. So he informed me that in the beginning he had given me life, and who had better right to take it away than he? Such, he said, was not his desire, however; he merely wished to borrow it occasionally, promising to return it punctually at the appointed time. Of course, there was a liability of mishaps, but I could do no more than take the chances.

The better to insure success, he wished me to be in the best possible condition, so I was dieted and trained like a great athlete before a decisive contest. What could I do? If I had to undergo the peril, it was best to be in good shape. In my intervals of relaxation he allowed me to assist in the arranging of the apparatus and in the various subsidiary experiments. The interest I took in all such operations can be imagined. I mastered the work as thoroughly as he, and often had the pleasure of seeing some of my suggestions or alterations put into effect. After such events I would smile grimly, conscious of officiating at my own funeral.

He began by inaugurating a series of experiments in toxicology. When all was ready, I was killed by a stiff dose of strychnine, and allowed to lie dead for some twenty hours. During that period my body was dead, absolutely dead. All respiration and circulation ceased; but the frightful part of it was, that while the protoplasmic coagulation proceeded, I retained consciousness, and was enabled to study it in all its ghastly details.

The apparatus to bring me back to life was an air-tight



He was gone. His clothes fell in a fantastic heap.

No more disputes and no time lost if you refer to the official rules in "Table-Tennis, and How to Play it," by Messrs. Ritchie and Harrison, the Organisers of the Royal Aquarium Tournaments.

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chamber, fitted to receive my body. The mechanism was simple—a few valves, a rotary shaft and crank, and an electric motor. When in operation, the interior atmosphere was alternately condensed and rarefied, thus communicating to my lungs an artificial respiration without the agency of the tubing previously used. Though my body was inert, and, for all I knew, in the first stages of decomposition, I was cognisant of everything that transpired. I knew when they placed me in the chamber, and though all my senses were quiescent, I was aware of hypodermic injections of a compound to react upon the coagulatory process. Then the chamber was closed and the machinery started. My anxiety was terrible; but the circulation became gradually restored, the different organs began to carry on the respective functions, and in an hour's time I was eating a hearty dinner.

It cannot be said that I participated in this series, nor in the subsequent ones, with much nerve; but after two ineffectual attempts at escape, I began to take quite an interest. Besides, I was becoming accustomed. My father was beside himself at his success, and as the months rolled by his speculations took wilder and yet wilder flights. We ranged through the three great classes of poisons, the neurotics, the gaseous, and the irritants, but carefully avoided some of the mineral irritants, and passed the whole group of corrosives. During the poison régime I became quite accustomed to dying, and had but one mishap to shake my growing confidence. Scarifying a number of lesser blood vessels in my arm, he introduced a minute quantity of that most frightful of poisons, the arrow poison, or curare. I lost consciousness at the start, quickly followed by the cessation of respiration and circulation, and so far had the solidification of the protoplasm advanced, that he gave up all hope. But at the last moment he applied a discovery he had been working upon, receiving such encouragement as to redouble his efforts.

Another series of delightful experiments was with electricity. We verified Tesla's assertion that high currents were utterly harmless by passing 100,000 volts through my body. As this did not affect me, the current was reduced to 2,500, and I was quickly electrocuted. This time he ventured so far as to allow me to remain dead, or in a state of suspended vitality, for three days. It took four hours to bring me back.

Once he superinduced lockjaw; but the agony of dying was so great that I positively refused to undergo similar experiments. The easiest deaths were by asphyxiation, such as drowning, strangling, and suffocation by gas; while those by morphine, opium, cocaine, and chloroform were not at all hard.

Another time, after being suffocated, he kept me in cold storage for three months, not permitting me to freeze or decay. This was without my knowledge, and I was in a great fright on discovering the lapse of time. I became afraid of what he might do with me when I lay dead, my alarm being increased by the predilection he was beginning to betray toward vivisection. The last time I was resurrected, I discovered that he had been tampering with my breast. Though he had carefully dressed and sewed the incisions up, they were so severe that I had to take to my bed for some time. It was during this convalescence that I evolved the plan by which I ultimately escaped.

While feigning unbounded enthusiasm in the work, I asked and received a vacation from my unpleasant occupation. During this period I devoted myself to laboratory work, while he was too deep in the vivisection of the many animals captured by the blacks to take notice of my work.

It was on these two propositions that I constructed my theory: First, electrolysis, or the decomposition of water into its constituent gases by means of electricity; and, second, by the hypothetical existence of a force, the converse of gravitation which has been named "apergy." Terrestrial attraction, for instance, merely draws objects together but does not combine them; hence, apergy is merely repulsion. Now, atomic or molecular attraction not only draws objects together but integrates them; and it was the converse of this, or a disintegrative force, which I wished not only to discover and produce, but to direct at will. Thus the molecules of hydrogen and oxygen reacting on each other, separate and create new molecules, containing both elements and forming water. Electrolysis causes these molecules to split up and resume their original condition, producing the two gases separately. The force I wished to find must not only do this with two, but with all elements, no matter in what compounds they exist. If I could then entice my father within its radius, he would be instantly disentegrated and sent flying to the four quarters, a mass of isolated elements.

By two powerful batteries, connected with magnets constructed specially for this purpose, two tremendous forces were projected. Considered apart from each other, they were perfectly harmless; but they accomplished their work by focussing at an invisible point in mid-air. After practically demonstrating its success, besides narrowly escaping being blown into nothingness, I laid my trap. Concealing the magnets, so that their force made the whole space of my chamber doorway a field of death, and placing by my couch a button by which I could throw on the current from the storage batteries, I climbed into bed.

The blackies still guarded my sleeping quarters, one relieving the other at midnight. I turned on the current as soon as the first man arrived. Hardly had I begun to doze, when I was aroused by a sharp, metallic tinkle. There, on the mid-threshold, lay the collar of Dan, my father's St. Bernard. My keeper ran to pick it up. He disappeared like a gust of wind, his clothes falling to the floor in a heap. There was a slight whiff of ozone in the air, but since the principal gaseous components of his body were hydrogen, oxygen, and nitrogen, which are equally colourless and odourless, there was no other manifestation of his departure. Yet when I shut off the current and removed the garments, I found a deposit of carbon in the form of animal charcoal; also other powders, the isolated, solid elements of his organism, such as sulphur, potassium, and iron. Resetting the trap, I crawled back to bed. At midnight I got up and removed the remains of the second blacky, and then slept peacefully till morning.

I was awakened by the strident voice of my father, who was calling to me from across the laboratory. I laughed to myself. There had been no one to call him and he had overslept. I could hear him as he approached my room with the intention of rousing me, and so I sat up in bed, the better to observe his translation—perhaps apotheosis were a better term. He paused a moment at the threshold, then took the fatal step. Puff! It was like the wind sighing among the pines. He was gone. His clothes fell in a fantastic heap on the floor. Besides ozone, I noticed the faint, garlic-like odour of phosphorus. A little pile of elementary solids lay among his garments. That was all. The wide world lay before me. My captors were not.

G. J. W.

The Lovers of Yvonne

By RAFAEL SABATINI.

CHAPTER XIX.

Of my Return to Paris.

SCANT cause is there for me to tarry over the details of my return to Paris. A sad enough journey it was; as sad for myself as for my poor Michelot, since he rode with one so dejected as I.

Things had gone ill, and I feared that, when the Cardinal heard the story, things would go worse; for Mazarin was never a tolerant man, nor one to be led by the gospel of mercy and forgiveness. For myself I foresaw the rope—possibly even the wheel; and a hundred times a day I dubbed myself a fool for obeying the voice of honour with such punctiliousness, when so grim a reward awaited me. What mood was on me—me, Gaston de Luynes, whose honour had been long since besmirched and tattered until no outward semblance of honour was left it?

But swift in the footsteps of that question would come the answer—Yvonne. Aye, truly enough, it was because in my heart I had dared to hold a sentiment of love for her, the purest—nay, the only pure—thing my heart had held for many a year, that I would set nothing vile to keep company with that sentiment; that until my sun should set—and already it dropped swiftly towards life's horizon—my actions should be the actions of such a man as might win Yvonne's affections.

But let that be. This idle retrospective mood can interest you but little; nor can you profit from it, unless indeed it be by noting how holy and cleansing to the heart of man is the love—albeit unrequited—that he bears a good woman.

As we drew near Meung, where we lay on the first night of our journey, a light travelling chaise, going in the same direction, passed us at a gallop. As it flashed by I caught a glimpse of Eugène de Canaples' swart face through the window. Whether the recognition was mutual, I cannot say, nor does it signify.

When we reached the *Hotel de la Couronne*, half-an-hour later, we saw that same chaise disappearing round a corner of the street, whilst through the gateway the ostler was leading a pair of horses, foam-flecked and steaming with sweat.

Whither went Master Canaples at such a rate, and in a haste that caused him to travel day and night? To a goal he little looked for—or rather which in the madness of his headlong rush he could not see. So I was to learn ere long.

Next day I awoke betimes, and setting my window wide, to let in the fresh, clean-smelling air of that May morning, I made shift to dress. Save for the cackle of the poultry which had strayed into the courtyard, and the noisy yawns and sleep-laden ejaculations of the stable-boy who was drawing water for the horses, all was still, for it had not yet gone five o'clock.

But of a sudden a door opened somewhere, and a step rang out, accompanied by the jangle of spurs, and with it came a sharp, unpleasant voice calling for its owner's horse. There was a familiar sound in those shrill accents that caused me to thrust my head through the casement. But I was quick to withdraw it, as I recognised in the gaily-dressed little fellow below, my old friend Malpertuis, though I knew not what impulse made me draw back so suddenly.

From behind my curtains I watched Malpertuis riding out of the yard, saying, in answer to a parting question of the landlord, who had come upon the scene, that he would breakfast at Beaugency.

Then, as he rode down the street, he of a sudden raised his discordant voice and sang to the accompaniment of his horse's hoofs, and the burden of his song rang thus:

"A *Frondeur** wind
Got up to-day,
'Gainst Mazarin
It blows they say."

I listened in amazement to his raven's voice.

Whither was he bound, I asked myself, and whence a haste that made him set out fasting, and with an anti-cardinalist ditty on his lips, and ride two leagues to seek a breakfast in a village that did not hold an inn where a dog might be housed in comfort?

Like Eugène de Canaples, he travelled also towards a goal that he little dreamt of. And so albeit the one went south and the other north, these two men were, betwixt them, drawing together the threads of this narrative of mine, as anon you shall learn.

We reached Paris at dusk, three days later, and we went straight to my old lodging in the Rue St. Antoine.

Coupri started and gasped upon beholding me, and not until I had reviled him for a fool in a voice that was passing human, he would believe that I was no ghost. He too had heard the rumour of my death.

I dispatched Michelot to the Palais Royal, where, without permitting his motive to transpire, he was to ascertain for me whether M. de Montresor was in Paris, whether he still dwelt at the *Hotel des Cloches*, and at what hour he could be found there.

Whilst he was away I went up to my room, and there I found a letter which Coupri informed me had been left by a lackey a month ago, before the report that I had been killed had reached Paris, and since lain forgotten. It was a delicate note, to to which still hung the ghost of a perfume; there were no arms on the seal, but the writing I took to be that of my aunt,

* The *Frondeurs* were members of certain factions in France during the minority of Louis XIV., who were hostile to the Court and the minister, Mazarin, and gave rise to a series of civil dissensions from 1648 to 1654.

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the Duchesse de Chevreuse; and vaguely marvelling what motive she could have had for communicating with me, I cut the silk.

It was indeed from the Duchesse, but it contained no more than a request that I should visit her at her hotel on the day following that upon which she had written, adding that she had pleasing news for me.

I thrust the note into my pocket with a sigh. Of what could it avail me now to present myself at her hotel? Her invitation was for a month ago. Since then she would likely enough have heard the rumour that had been current, and would have ceased to expect me.

I caught myself wondering whether the news might have caused her a pang of regret, and somehow methought this possible; for of all my relatives, Madame de Chevreuse was the only one—and she was but my aunt by marriage—who of late years had shown me any kindness or even recognition. I marvelled what her pleasing news could be, and I concluded that probably she had heard of my difficulties, and wished once again to help me out of them. Well, my purse was hollow indeed at the moment; but I need not trouble her, since I was going somewhere where purses were not needed—on a journey to which no expenses are attached.

In my heart, nevertheless, I blessed the gracious lady who, for all the lies that the world may have told of her, was the kindest woman I had known, and the best—save one other.

I was still musing when Michelot returned with the information that M. de Montrésor was to be found at the *Hotel des Cloches*, whither he had gone to sup a few minutes before. Straightway I set out, bidding him attend me, and, muffled in my cloak, I proceeded at a brisk pace to the Rue des Fosses St. Germain, where the lieutenant's quarters were situated.

I left Michelot in the common room, and preceded by the plump little woman who owned the house, I ascended to Montrésor's chamber. I found the young soldier at table, and fortunately alone. He rose as I entered, and as the hostess, retreating, closed the door, I doffed my hat, and letting fall my cloak, revealed myself. His lips parted, and I heard the hiss of an indrawn breath as his astonished eyes fell upon my countenance. My laugh dispelled his doubts that I might be other than flesh and blood, yet not his doubts touching my identity. He caught up a taper, and coming forward he cast the light on my face for a moment, then, setting the candle back upon the table, he vented his surprise in an oath or two, which was natural enough in one of his calling.

"'Tis clear, lieutenant," quoth I, as I detached my sword from the baldrick, "that you believed me dead. Fate willed, however, that I should be restored to life, and so soon as I had recovered sufficient strength to undertake the journey to Paris I set out. I arrived an hour ago, and here I am, to redeem my word of honour, and surrender the sword and liberty which you but lent me."

I placed my rapier on the table and waited for him to speak. Instead, however, he continued to stare at me for some moments, and when at last he did break the silence, it was to burst into a laugh that poured from his throat in rich, mellow peals as he lay back in his chair.

My gorge rose. Had I travelled from Blois and done what I deemed the most honourable deed of my life to be laughed at for my pains by a foppish young jackanapes of his Eminence's Guards? Something of my displeasure must he have seen reflected in my face, for of a sudden he checked his mirth.

"Forgive me, M. de Luynes," he gasped. "For, alas! 'tis no matter for laughter, and albeit I laughed with more zest than courtesy, I give you my word that my admiration for you vastly exceeds my amusement. M. de Luynes," he added, rising and holding out his hand to me, "there are liars in Paris who give you an evil name—men who laughed at me when they heard that I had given you leave to go on parole to St Sulpice des Reaux that night, trusting to your word of honour that you would return if you lived. His Eminence dubbed me a fool, and went near to dismissing me from his service and yet I have now the proof that my confidence was not misplaced, since even though you were believed to be dead, you did not hesitate to bring me your sword."

"Monsieur, spare me!" I exclaimed, for in truth his compliments waxed as irksome as had been his whilom merriment.

He continued, however, his laudatory address, and when it was at last ended, and he paused exhausted alike in breath and brain, it was to take up my sword and return it to me with my parole, pronouncing me a free man, and advising me to let men continue to think me dead, and to withdraw from France. He cut short my half-protesting thanks, and calling the hostess bade her set another cover, whilst he invited me to share his supper. And as we ate he again urged upon me the advice that I should go abroad.

"For, by Heaven!" he added, "Mazarin has been as a raging beast since the news was brought him yesterday of his nephew's marriage."

"How!" I cried. "He has heard already?"

"He has indeed; and should he learn that your flesh still walks the earth, methinks it would go worse with you than it went even with Eugène de Canaples."

In answer to the questions with which I excitedly plied him, I drew from him the story of how Eugène had arrived the day before in Paris, and gone straight to the Palais Royal. M. de Montrésor had been on guard in the ante-chamber, and in virtue of an excitement noticeable in Canaples' bearing, coupled with the ill-odour wherein already he was held by Mazarin, the lieutenant's presence had been commanded in the Cardinal's closet during the interview, for his Eminence was never like to acquire fame for valour.

In his exultation of what had chanced, and at the manner in which Mazarin's castles in the air had been dashed to the ground, Canaples used little caution, or even discretion, in what he said. In fact, from what Montrésor told me, I gathered that the fool's eagerness to be the first to bear the tidings to Mazarin sprang from a rash desire to gloat over the Cardinal's discomfiture. He had told his story insolently, almost derisively, and Mazarin's fury, driven beyond bounds already by what he had heard, became a very tempest of passion 'neath the lash of Canaples' impertinences. And naturally enough that tempest had burst upon the only head available—Eugène de Canaples—and the Cardinal had answered his jibes with interest by calling upon Montrésor to arrest the fellow and bear him to the Bastille.

When the astonished and sobered Canaples had indignantly asked upon what charge he was being robbed of his liberty, the Cardinal had laughed at him, and answered with his never-failing axiom that "he who sings, pays."

"You sang lustily enough just now," His Eminence had added, "and you shall pay by lodging a while in a dungeon of the Bastille, where you may lift up your voice to sing the *De Profundis*."

"Was my name not mentioned?" I anxiously inquired when Montrésor had finished.

"Not once. You may depend that I should have remarked it. After I had taken Canaples away, the Cardinal, I am told, sat down, and, still trembling with rage, wrote a letter which he straightway dispatched to the Chevalier Armand de Canaples at Blois."

"No doubt," I mused, "he attributes much blame to me for what has come to pass."

"Not a doubt of it. This morning he said to me that it was a pity your wings had not been clipped before you left Paris, and that his misplaced clemency had helped to bring him great misfortunes. You see, therefore, M. de Luynes, that your sojourn in France will be attended with great peril. I advise you to try Spain. 'Tis a martial country, where a man of the sword may find honourable and even profitable employment."

His counsel I deemed sound. But how follow it? Then of a sudden I bethought me of Madame de Chevreuse's friendly letter. Doubtless she would assist me once again, and in such an extremity as this. And with the conception of the thought came the resolution to visit her on the morrow. That formed, I gave myself up to the task of drinking M. de

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Montrésor under the table with a freeness of heart which had not been mine for months. In each goblet that I drained methought I saw Yvonne's sweet face floating on the surface of the red Armagnac; it looked now sad, now reproachful, still I drank on, and in each cup I pledged her.

CHAPTER XX.
Of how the Chevalier de Canaples became a Frondeur.

It wanted an hour or so to noon next day as I drove across the Pont Neuf in a closed carriage and was borne down the Rue St. Dominique to the portals of that splendid palace facing the Jacobins which bears the title of the Hotel de Luynes, and over the portals of which is carved the escutcheon of our house.

Michelot, in obedience to the orders I had given him, got down, only to be informed that Madame la Duchesse was in the country. The lackey who was summoned did not know where the lady might be found, nor when she might return to Paris. And so I was compelled to drive back almost despairingly to the Rue St. Antoine, and there lie concealed, nursing my impatience, until my aunt should return.

Daily I sent Michelot to the Hotel de Luynes to make the same inquiry, and to return daily with the same dispiriting reply, that there was no news of Madame la Duchesse.

In this fashion some three weeks wore themselves out, during which period I lay in my concealment, a prey to weariness unutterable. I might not venture forth save at night unless I wore a mask, and as masks were no longer to be worn without attracting notice, as during the late king's reign, I dared not indulge the practice.

Certainly my *ennui* was greatly relieved by the visits of Montrésor, which grew very frequent, the lad appearing to have conceived a fondness for me; and during those three weeks our fellowship at nights over a bottle or two engendered naturally enough a friendship and an intimacy betwixt us.

I had written to Andrea on the morrow of my return to Paris, to tell him how kindly Montrésor had dealt with me, and some ten days later the following letter was brought me by the lieutenant, to whom, for safety, it had been forwarded:

"My very dear Gaston,

"I have no words wherewith to express my joy at the good news you send me, which terminates the anxiety that has been mine since you left us on the disastrous morning of our nuptials.

"The uncertainty touching your fate, the fear that the worst might have befallen you, and the realisation that I, for whom you have done so much, might do naught for you in your hour of need, has been the one cloud to mar the sunshine of my own bliss.

"That cloud your letter has dispelled, and the knowledge of your safety renders my happiness complete.

"The Chevalier maintains his unforgiving mood, as no doubt doth also my Lord Cardinal. But what to me are the frowns of either so that my lady smile? My little Geneviève is yet somewhat vexed in spirit at all this; but I am teaching her to have faith in Time, the patron saint of all lovers who follow not the course their parents set them. And so that Time may be allowed to intercede and appeal to the parent heart with the potent prayer of a daughter's absence, I shall take my lady from Chambord some three days hence. We shall travel by easy stages to Marseilles, and there take ship for Palermo.

"And so, dear, trusty friend, until we meet again fare you well, and may God hold you safe from the wickedness of man, devil, and my Lord Cardinal.

"For all that you have done for me no words of mine can thank you; but should you determine to quit this France of yours and journey to Palermo after me, you shall never want a roof to shelter you or a board to sit at so long as roof and board are owned by him who signs himself, in love at least, your brother,

"Andrea de Mancini."

WHY REMAIN TOO FAT?

You can be Permanently Cured!

Permanently? the reader will exclaim interrogatively. Yes, reader, permanently; that is the secret of the "Russell" treatment for the cure of corpulency. Yet it is not wholly a secret, for in "Corpulency and the Cure," the book which lies before us, Mr. F. C. Russell, the author of this remarkable work, and the founder of the still more remarkable treatment which bears his name, gives, *coram populo*, the RECIPE of the compound which forms the basis of his treatment. This compound, a liquid tonic pleasant to the palate is purely vegetable and perfectly harmless to the most delicate subject, as our stout readers may see for themselves if they care to procure a copy of the book by sending three penny stamps to Mr. F. Cecil Russell, Woburn House, Store Street, Bedford Square, London, W.C., who will despatch the same by return post, under plain sealed envelope. The "Russell" system differs from other systems, not only by reason of its permanent reductive results, but because it entails no disagreeable restrictions, dietetic or otherwise—none but what any rational person anxious to disburden himself or herself of an excessive *couche* of subcutaneous fat would inevitably adopt. No violent exercise is necessary, nor is there any need for cathartics in any form. As to the semi-starvation methods that prevail, these are totally opposed to the "Russell" treatment, which, indeed, promotes appetite, and requires that the increased appetite shall be satisfied. This seems paradoxical, but is easily explained. The rapid elimination of the unwholesome fatty deposits from the system would be weakening under ordinary starvation methods, but the "Russell" treatment helps to give nourishment to the body, thus forming new blood and muscle, so that the strain upon the system is amply counteracted, and the whole organism restrengthened and revitalised.

Readers of "Corpulency and the Cure" will be very interested in the testimony of patients who have followed the "Russell" treatment. A section of the book contains a thousand extracts from letters written to him by Mr. Russell's grateful patients, and these expressions of opinion bear out to the full all the claims for his system advanced by the gifted author. We should say here that the reductive process begins within twenty-four hours of beginning the treatment, the decrease being (as the weighing machine will show) from ½lb. to 2lbs., even as much as 4lbs. in very extreme cases of fatness. This reduction is steadily maintained day by day until the required condition of slimness is reached, when the treatment may be abandoned. Let it be distinctly understood that the decrease is not merely abdominal, but manifests itself over the entire body, so that perfect and permanent symmetry and grace are attained. These facts are corroborated by the eloquent testimony alluded to above. We remark several extracts headed "One day test" (which might, with more lucidity, be called "First day test") in which the reduction brought about within the first twenty-four hours is stated to be the full 2lbs. There, stout friends, go you and do likewise! First of all, get the book.

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With a sigh I set the letter down. A sigh of love and gratitude it was; a sigh also of regret for the bright, happy boy who had been the source alike of my recent joys and sorrows, and whom methought I was not like to see again for many a day, since the peaceful vegetation of his Sicilian home held little attraction for me, a man of action.

It was on the evening of the last Sunday in May, while the bell of the Jesuits, close by, was tinkling out its summons to vespers, that Montrésor burst suddenly into my room, with the request that I should get my hat and cloak and go with him to pay a visit. In reply to my questions, "Monseigneur's letter to Armand de Canaples," he said, "has borne fruit already. Come with me and you shall learn how."

He led me past the Bastille and up the Rue des Tournelles to the door of an unpretentious house, upon which he knocked. We were admitted by an old woman to whom Montrésor appeared to be known, for, after exchanging a word or two with her, he himself led the way upstairs, and opened the door of a room for me.

By the melancholy light of a single taper burning upon the table, I beheld a fair-sized room, containing a curtained bed.

My companion took up the candle, and stepping to the bedside he drew apart the curtains.

Lying there, I beheld a man whose countenance, despite its pallor and the blood-stained bandages about his brow, I recognised for that of the little spitfire Malpertuis.

As the light fell upon his face the little fellow opened his eyes, and upon beholding me at his side, he made a sudden movement which wrung from him a cry of pain.

"Lie still, Monsieur," said Montrésor quietly.

But for all the lieutenant's remonstrances, he struggled up into a sitting posture, requesting Montrésor to set the pillows at his back.

"Thank God you are here, M. de Luynes!" he said; "I learnt at Canaples that you were not dead."

"You have been to Canaples?"

"I was the guest of the Chevalier for twelve days. I arrived there on the day after your departure."

"You!" I ejaculated. "Pray what took you to Canaples?"

"What took me there?" he echoed, turning his feverish eyes upon me almost with fierceness. "The same motive that led me to join hands with that ruffian St. Auban when he spoke of waging war against Mancini; the same motive that led me to break with him when I saw through his plans, and when the abduction of Mademoiselle was on foot; the same motive that made me come to you and tell you of the proposed abduction so that you might interfere if you had the power, or cause others to do so, if you had not."

I lay back in my chair and stared at him. Was this, then, another suitor of Yvonne de Canaples, and were all men mad with love of her?

Presently he continued, "When I heard that St. Auban was in Paris, having apparently abandoned all hope in connection with Mademoiselle, I obtained a letter from M. de La Rochefoucauld, who is an intimate friend of mine, and armed with this I set out. As luck would have it, I got embroiled in the streets of Blois with a couple of cardinalist gentlemen who chose to be offended by a lampoon of the *Fronde* that I was humming. I am not a patient man, and I am even indiscreet in moments of choler. I ended by crying, 'Down with Mazarin and all his creatures,' and I would of a certainty have had my throat slit had not a slight and elegant gentleman interposed, and, exercising a wonderful influence over my assailants, extricated me from my predicament. This gentleman was the Chevalier de Canaples. He was, strangely enough, in a mood to be pleased by an anti-cardinalist ditty, for his rage against Andrea de Mancini, which he took no pains to conceal, had extended already to the Cardinal, and from morn till night he did little else but revile the whole Italian brood, as he chose to dub the Cardinal's family.

I had only been there three days before I sustained a shock by the unexpected appearance at Canaples of St. Auban. The Chevalier, however, refused him admittance, and, baffled, the Marquis was forced to withdraw. But he went no further than Blois, where he hired himself a room at the *Lys de France*. The Chevalier hated him as a mad dog hates water; almost as much as he hated you. He spoke often of you, and always bitterly."

Before I knew what I had said, "And Mademoiselle?" I burst out. "Did she ever mention my name?"

Malpertuis looked up quickly at the question, and a wan smile flickered round his lips.

"Once she spoke of you to me, pityingly, as one might speak of a dead man whose life had not been good."

"Yes, yes," I broke in. "It matters little. Your story, M. Malpertuis."

"After I had been at the Chateau ten days, we learnt that Eugène de Canaples had been sent to the Bastille. The news came in a letter penned by his Eminence himself—a bitter, viperish letter, with a covert threat in every line. The Chevalier's anger went white hot as he read the disappointed Cardinal's epistle. His Eminence accused Eugène of being a *Frondeur*: M. de Canaples, whose politics had grown sadly rusted in the country, asked me the meaning of the word. I explained to him the petty squabbles betwixt Court and Parliament, in consequence of the extortionate imposts, and of Mazarin's avariciousness. I avowed myself a partisan of the *Fronde*, and within three days the Chevalier, who but a little time before had sought an alliance with the Cardinal's family, had become as rabid a *Frondeur* as M. de Gondi, as fierce an anti-cardinalist as M. de Beaufort.

"I humoured him in his new madness, with the result that, ere long, from being a *Frondeur* in heart, he thirsted to become a *Frondeur* in deeds; and he ended by begging me to bear a letter from him to the Coadjutor of Paris, wherein he offered to place at M. de Gondi's disposal, towards the expenses of the civil war which he believed to be imminent, as indeed it is, the sum of sixty thousand livres.

"Now albeit I had gone to Canaples for purposes of my own, and not as an agent of M. le Coadjuteur, still for many reasons I saw fit to undertake the Chevalier's commission; and so, bearing the letter in question, which was hot and unguarded, and charged with endless treasonable matter, I set out four days later for Paris, arriving here yesterday.

"I little knew that I had been followed by St. Auban. His suspicions must have been awakened, I know not how, and clearly they were confirmed when I stopped before the Coadjutor's house last night. I was about to mount the steps, when of a sudden I was seized from behind by half-a-dozen hands, and dragged into a side street. I got free for a moment and attempted to defend myself, but besides St. Auban there were two others. They broke my sword, and attempted to break my skull, in which they went perilously near succeeding, as you see. Albeit half-swooning, I had yet sufficient consciousness left to realise that my pockets were being emptied, and that at last they had torn open my doublet and withdrawn the treasonable letter from the breast of it.

"I was left bleeding in the kennel, and there I lay for nigh upon an hour, until a passer-by succoured me, and carried out my request to be brought hither and put to bed."

He ceased, and for some moments there was silence broken only by the wounded man's laboured breathing, which argued that his narrative had left him fatigued. At last I sprang up.

"The Chevalier de Canaples must be warned," I exclaimed.

"'Tis an ugly business," muttered Montrésor. "I'll wager a hundred pistoles that Mazarin will hang the Chevalier if he catches him just now."

"He would not dare!" cried Malpertuis.

"Not dare!" echoed the lieutenant. "The man who imprisoned the Princes of Conde and Conti and the Duke of Beaufort not dare hang a provincial knight with never a friend at Court! Pah! Monsieur, you do not know Cardinal Mazarin."

I realised to the full how likely Montrésor's prophecy was to be fulfilled, and before I left Malpertuis I assured him that he had not poured his story into the ears of an indifferent listener, and that I would straightway find means of communicating with Canaples.

(To be continued.)

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EASY WHEN UNDERSTOOD.

"In a country hotel, where I had stopped for supper," said a traveller, "I saw on the table some boiled eggs. As I reached for them the waitress said:

"'Do you like them hard or soft boiled?'

"'Soft,' I said.

"'The soft boiled are in the other dish,' said the waitress.

"Then, as I looked the other way on the table, I saw another dish of eggs. But they looked precisely like those in the first dish, and I wondered how anybody could tell them apart if they should ever get mixed up. As long as they were kept at the ends of the table where they were first placed it would be very simple, but suppose some polite guest should say to his neighbour:

"'Will you have the eggs?'

"And suppose the man should say 'Yes, thank you,' and take them, and suppose one dish in this way worked along the table until it was alongside the other: or, for that matter, suppose the dishes should change places, as they might easily do, who could tell then which were hard and which soft? I found myself rather amused by this idea, and I asked the waitress how they could tell which was which.

"'Why, the soft boiled are in the square dish and the hard boiled are in the oval dish.'

"Then I stopped talking for quite a while, for it seemed clear to me that I was, in some things, not an intellectual giant."

A SALVATIONIST'S REMARKABLE EXPERIENCE.

COLD CHILLS, DEBILITY, AND FAINTING FITS NEARLY ENDED HER DAYS.

MARVELLOUS BILE BEAN CURE.

"I began to have cold chills which ran through me as if cold water had been poured over my skin."

The speaker, Mrs. E. Sheldon, of 6 Bright Street, New Brighton, Morley, was telling a reporter the marvellous rescue from a serious illness by Chas. Forde's Bile Beans for Biliousness.

"It is four or five years ago," continued Mrs. Sheldon (now the picture of health), "that I first became ill. I had these cold chills; and got so weak and languid that I could not do my work. My appetite fell off; and even when I got something tempting to make me eat I had no relish for it. Doctors gave me medicine, which, however, did not bring me round. Eventually I got a "recommend" for the Cookridge Hospital, and stayed there under special treatment for three weeks. At the end of that time I was a little better, but upon my return home I soon drifted back into my old state.

"Then, three years ago, I began to have fits. I was at the sink one day when I thought there was such a terrible noise outside I could not make it out, so I went to the door. Directly I opened it I was overcome by a death-like sensation. I shouted out, and then I remember no more till I found myself lying down in bed with my friends gathered round me. The "noise in the street" only existed in my own head; and I had fainted immediately I reached the door.

The doctor was fetched, and said it was owing to my age, but another who attended me later said it was colic. A third described it as an epileptic fit. I was very ill in bed for several days; and suffered intense agony from flatulence. My body was swollen to a shocking extent; and when I took food it only made my condition worse. The fits continued, and as a rule I had them every few weeks. They made me a helpless invalid and kept me to my bed for ten days at a time.

"A strange thing occurred to me about this time, I lost my memory; my hearing was also affected, and my sight. I had to wear glasses to thread an ordinary needle; and without them I could not read a paper. I appeared to get worse in general health, losing flesh until I seemed all skin and bone. My nerves became quite shattered, and so afraid was I of being overtaken by a fit that I never dared go out without a bottle of sal volatile, or some stimulant handy for emergency.

"I am a member of the Salvation Army, and when I went to the meeting I always felt more at ease when I had someone for company who knew where to find the stimulant, should I go off in a fit.

Early this year I had a slight attack of English Cholera; and I think that the consequent weakness brought on a very bad fit.

"I was weeks bad after that, and could scarcely remember or see anything. I was in this condition when I heard of a man at Rothwell—where we used to live—who had benefited by taking Chas. Forde's Bile Beans. I was anxious to try them; and I determined to go in for a course. My condition was too serious for me to observe any decided change at first; but I felt sure they would do me good if I persevered.

"I followed carefully all the directions, and at the end of ten days I was able to crawl down stairs. I persevered with the Beans and my strength seemed to come back to me. My appetite also returned, and I was soon able to take many things I dared not touch before. I still went on with the medicine until cured. I have now no longer the fear of the fits, and I have benefited in every possible way. I have increased in weight, have regained my sight, my memory, and my hearing. The strange noises in my head, the wind, dizziness, the weakness, and all the other distressing symptoms of my case have, after these long years, completely given place to health, strength, and renewed vitality. For this I have Chas. Forde's Bile Beans alone to thank, and I never tire of recommending them to my friends."

Chas. Forde's Bile Beans for Biliousness may be obtained from any chemist, or post free from the Bile Bean Manufacturing Co.'s Head English Depot, 119 and 120 London Wall, London, E.C., upon receipt of prices, 1/1½ or 2/9. (2/9 box contains 3 times 1/1½ size.) Bile Beans are sold only in sealed boxes, never loose.

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We devote every week space in *Short Stories* to pithy, humorous anecdotes similar to those which appear in these columns. To those readers who submit storyettes which are used, a six shilling novel will be awarded. The anecdotes may be either original or selected; in the latter case, the source MUST be stated. Attempts must reach the Storyette Editor, *Short Stories* Office, Henrietta Street, Strand, London, W.C., by Monday, February 10th. Post-cards only, please.

Take it Now.

HOTEL WAITER: "Shall I take your order now, missy, or will you wait till your mamma comes in?" Little Girl: "I wish you'd take it now. Mamma never orders anything 'cept what's good for me."

How Nice for Hubby!

BRIDE (after return from honeymoon); "I see by this medical work that a man requires eight hours' sleep and a woman ten." Bridegroom: "Yes, I've read that somewhere myself." Bride: "How nice. You can get up every morning, and have the fire made and the breakfast ready before it is time for me to get up."

It Makes No Difference.

"I SUPPOSE you don't believe in courtship," said the paragraphist laughingly to the manager of the gas company. "Why not?" asked the manager. "Because lovers always turn the gas down, you know. Ha! ha! ha!" "Oh, that makes no difference," said the manager. "The meter gets in its work all the same."

Waiting for Each Other.

"GABRIEL," said the doctor's wife, "have you settled yet with Lawyer Sharp for conducting that case for you in court last year?" "No," said the doctor. "It was about that time, you remember, that I performed an operation on him, and I want to know what his bill is before I make out mine. I suppose he's waiting for the same reason."

An Ambitious Boy.

LITTLE BOY: "Papa, may I study elocution?" Proud Papa: "Indeed you may, my boy, if you wish. You desire to become a great orator, don't you?" "Yes, that's it." "And some day, perhaps, have your voice ringing through the halls of Westminster?" "I shouldn't care for that. I want to be an after-dinner speaker." "Ah, you are ambitious for social distinctions, then?" "No, I want the dinners."

One on the Landlady.

THE landlady was in a sentimental mood. "This is the anniversary of the death of my poor dear old Uncle John," she sighed. "He was a sea-captain and went down with his ship this day five and thirty years ago. I was only a child when he went away, but I remember he gave me a pet lamb as a parting gift." "And you've killed it at last!" said the star boarder reproachfully, picking up a piece of mutton on his fork and regarding it with mournful interest.

A Reasonable Conclusion.

LITTLE DOT: "Mamma is going to take me with her when she visits Aunt Jenny." Little Dick: "She goin' to take me, too." "Did she say so?" "No." "Then how do you know?" "She'll never leave me here with that cupboard full of jam."

Took it as an Insult.

A MANCHESTER firm that has recently introduced a typewriter into their correspondence department received a letter from an indignant customer the other day, saying: "I want you to understand that you needn't print letters sent to me. I can read writing—even yours—and I don't want to be insulted by reflections on my education."

A Check on the Post-Office.

AN old woman living near Pitlochry, N.B., drew her money out of the post-office savings-bank the other day. Having been paid the sum standing in her name, she took it to the corner of the post-office, laboriously counted it several times, and then, returning to the counter, handed if back again, saying: "Take it, mon, and go on keeping it. I only wanted to see if it was a'richt."

The Merchant's Test.

A PARISIAN merchant, who has been several times robbed by unfaithful cashiers, has invented an infallible test of competency. The cashier presents himself, offers his services, shows his references. Then the merchant says: "Show me how you could erase a mistake in your figures." The aspiring cashier sets to work with scraper, ink-eraser, and what not, and, if he succeeds in destroying all trace of the erasure, he is invited to take his hat and leave.

He Wanted it Repeated.

TEACHER: "Boys, I would like to impress upon your young minds the necessity of forgiving and forgetting. Forgive the injury your companions may have done you, and forget the feelings of revenge that have filled your hearts." Small Boy (whispering to teacher): "Teacher, won't you please say that over again? Jimmie Pease says he's going to wollop me within an inch of my life after school, and I want him to forget all about it, 'cos he's too big for me."

A Talented House Agent.

MRS. HOMESEEKER: "You certainly don't expect anybody to take this house? Why, the floors all run down-hill." Agent (a smart man): "It was built in that way on purpose, mum, to keep peace in the family. Greatest invention of the age, mum." Mrs. Homeseeker: "Keep peace in the family? What do you mean?" Agent: "It's all right, mum—nothing like it. Whenever your husband drops his collar-studs they'll roll down to that wall, and he'll always know where to find 'em."

IT IS ALWAYS INTERESTING

to know other people's opinion of yourself, especially when that opinion is absolutely unbiassed.

If you want to know what sort of a person you are, send a specimen of your handwriting to

RANEE, 32 Pearson's Buildings, Henrietta Street, London, W.C.,

Inclosing six penny stamps and a stamped addressed envelope.

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Has been used for 50 Years, it

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RHEUMATISM	TOOTHACHE
NEURALGIA	FACEACHE
SCIATICA	BACKACHE
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CONQUERS PAIN!

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For ECZEMA AND ALL SKIN ERUPTIONS.

A victim, who was cured after five years' suffering, will gladly send full particulars of an inexpensive, guaranteed Cure on receipt of stamped addressed envelope.—PACIDERMA, 218 Piccadilly, London, W.

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CURED. This can be done with or without patient's knowledge. Send me a stamp and I will tell you how. (Send no money.) Address, in confidence, Mrs. C. H. (Room 8), 195 Oxford Street, London, W.

DON'T COUGH USE KEATING'S LOZENGES FOR YOUR COUGH.

ANY DOCTOR WILL TELL YOU, "there is no better Cough Medicine." —One gives relief: if you suffer from cough try them but once; they *will* cure, and they *will not* injure your health; an increasing sale of over 80 years is a certain test of their value. Sold in 1½d. tins.

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PURE FRUIT JAMS

BUY

PINK'S

New Season's Jams

SYMONDS'

CYCLES AT HALF PRICE

Hundreds of policemen and constabulary riders' Symonds' cycles, they are the best and cheapest. Warranted 2 years, prices £4 to £8, easy payments, full satisfaction. No matter who you are or what your business is, we will sell a cycle to you on easy payments, no guarantor required. Write for catalogue. Mention name of this paper. SYMONDS' LONDON STORES, 11 Hatton Garden, London.

VARICOCELE.

Every Man suffering from Varicocele and its consequent nervous exhaustion speedily relieved and cured by the most advanced and rational method of treatment yet introduced. An Illustrated Circular giving full particulars and testimonials showing successful cures, sent free in a sealed envelope.—S. S. NORTON, 59 and 60 Chancery Lane, London, W.C. Established over 30 years. Consultation Free.

UGLY NOSES. Ray's Nose Machines reform Pug, Snub, Broad, Bottled, Crooked, or Prominent Noses. By H. W. Royal Letters Patent. Thousands improved. Particulars for stamp, Red Nose Cure, medically approved, 3/9. Book "Cause and Cure," 1/-. Ear machines, etc. Less Ray (A 1), Specialist, South Castle Street, Liverpool

VARICOSE VEINS,

Bad Legs, etc., are completely cured with inexpensive home treatment. A guaranteed remedy. Full particulars (with testimonials) on receipt of 2 stamps.—S. S. Roberts 9 Playfair Rd., Southsea.

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can be made by any lady who follows carefully the Paper Pattern and Instructions

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HOME NOTES

(No. 421).

The Best & Daintiest of Ladies' Weeklies. You should get a Copy at once.

ONE PENNY.

Mr. Geo. R. Sims'

"TATCHO"

THE GREAT HAIR RENEWER.

WHAT PEOPLE THEMSELVES ARE SAYING:

"A PEARL BEYOND PRICE."—35 Aberdeen Road, Cotham, Bristol. December 23rd, 1901. Mrs. E. C. Parsons regards "Tatcho" as a pearl beyond price. In her opinion everybody desiring to cultivate, improve, or retain a good head of hair should try it.

"3 SEPARATE HAIRDRESSERS."—Rostherne, St. Stephen's Road, Bournemouth, November 30th, 1901. Mrs. Lloyd wants to give three bottles of "Tatcho" to some friends here, as a lady in the house is st ongly recommending it, and says that three separate hairdressers tell her what a wonderful growth of new hair she has.

"A WONDERFUL DISCOVERY."—Lyss Place, Liss, Hants, November 30th, 1901. I find "Tatcho" a most excellent and pleasing application for the hair; in fact, a wonderful discovery which ought to be very widely known.—H. PELHAM PAPILLON.

CUT THIS OUT AND **POST TO-DAY.** (If your Local Chemist or Store is unable to supply the large Trial Bottle.) THIS **COUPON** ENTITLES THE SENDER TO A LARGE TRIAL BOTTLE SIZE FOR **4/6** **1/10** Direct from the "Tatcho" Depot, Carr. Paid.

S.S. ..... 1902.

In making this unique offer the Company is acting with the knowledge that such distribution of large Trial Bottles is making the preparation even more widely known, and is introducing it to every home in a more satisfactory manner than could be effected by any other system of advertising.

"TATCHO" is a brilliant, spirituous tonic, the colour of whisky, free from all grease.
"TATCHO" is not a dye, and contains no colouring matter or any harmful ingredient.
"TATCHO" is sold by all Chemists and Stores throughout the world in bottles at 1s., 2s. 9d., and 5s.

"TATCHO" OFFICES, 81 Great Queen Street, Lincoln's Inn Fields, London, W.C.

"NO BETTER FOOD."

Dr. ANDREW WILSON, F.R.S.E., &c.

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Cocoa.

300 GOLD MEDALS, ETC.

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ABSOLUTE PURITY.

IMPORTANT CAUTION.—Sold only in tins with gilt tops.

KAPUTINE

The Best & Safest Remedy for HEADACHE.

NURSE HILL, of the London Association of Nurses, writes:

"I have seen Kaputine administered to many patients, and can truly say it is a remedy which should have a place in every household."

All Leading Chemists sell KAPUTINE, 1/-. Samples One Penny.

If your Chemist has not KAPUTINE send his name and address to C.G. KAPUTINE, HUDDERSFIELD and we will send you SAMPLES FREE.

WORTH A CROWN A DOSE.

IN CONFIDENCE.

Conducted by MADGE MORRIS.

[*I shall be glad to answer, to the best of my ability, any letters from readers dealing with affairs of the heart, tangles in domestic life, or points of etiquette. All communications must be addressed to me personally, c/o the Editor of* SHORT STORIES.—MADGE MORRIS.]

A brave little girl is "Elsie." She is only thirteen years old, and yet looks after the house for her father, and has entire charge of three little children. She writes to ask me what she can do to prevent the little boy from tearing his clothes, and falling down in the mud. Never mind the mud, "Elsie," one day's dirt never did a child any harm. Little legs are apt to be unsteady at four years old, and boys will be boys. Certainly you are old enough to be one of my friends.

"Grannie" writes to say that she would like to know of a seaside place which will suit her daughter, who has a delicate chest. She is fond of a certain amount of gaiety, and does not care about going abroad?——The best I know of, "Grannie," is Bournemouth. It is on the south coast, and the air and the smell of the pine trees are especially good for the chest. There is always plenty going on in the Winter Gardens and elsewhere. Thank you for your cheery letter and good wishes.

"A Girl Wife" asks what is the reason that she feels so awkward and ill at ease whenever her husband brings any friends of his into tea or supper. She feels ready to cry, and, for the life of her cannot think of anything to say, and it vexes her husband more than a little. It is a very common type of nervousness, "Girl Wife."——Try and think less about your feelings, and remember that you, as hostess, should be the one to try and put your visitors at their ease. In time you will get over it, and forget that you ever were so shy.

"Sailor's Lass" is in doubt as to which of two men she should keep company with: the sailor lad who is short-tempered, or the country lad who is reckless. The sailor lad has been keeping company with her for seven months, and last week the other came to see if she would keep company with him. His companions give him a bad name, so she does not know what to do.——From the tone of your letter, "Sailor's Lass," I should say the sailor is the one you love the better, and if so, I should stick to him. Tell the country lad that he must not keep coming to see you, as you are keeping company with the sailor.

"Darby and Joan" write me a joint letter and this is what they say: "We are the happiest couple alive, and yet both of us are dreading the hour when one shall be called to rest and so leave the other alone! We are eighty-three years old."——I quite understand your feeling anxious, "Darby and Joan," but you say you are the happiest couple alive, and surely this is something to be very thankful for. When the call comes, I am sure the one left will have hope and faith enough to feel that the other is waiting with hands outstretched in welcome. So try and forget all but this! Life is so short that it should be happy, and if possible free from care.

"Daisy Bell" asks me what I must confess is a very silly question. "I love a young man deeply," she says, "but I have only seen him once. He is tall and dark, and has a lovely drooping moustache. How can I get to know him, and is he the man I shall marry?" Now, "Daisy Bell," how *do* you suppose I should know whom you are going to marry? As to "loving a man deeply" whom you have only seen once, that is utter nonsense. Fifteen is far too young for you to be thinking about love at all, so forget all about him, and in years to came you may meet with some man who will take a fancy to you and make you happy.

"F. H. T." says: "I have two girls, one in England and one in America; the one in England is very jealous even if I kiss her married sister, and I have had a quarrel with her. The American never quarrels with me, is not jealous, and loves me more. Which one shall I be engaged to?"——From what you tell me, "F. H. T.," I should certainly advise you to get engaged to the American girl, but, at the same time, remember to be jealous shows that the English girl loves you too. America is a long way off, but a girl who is not jealous is seldom met with, so I think you would be happiest if engaged to her. Jealousy is the ruin of many a happy home.

"Mrs. X.," a lady who has never touched an intoxicant, hears that Mrs. Z has told a certain person that she drinks. How can this slander be refuted?——Get the person to whom the untruth was told to invite the slanderer to his or her house on a certain day. Arrange to call in yourself at the same time. In a tactful way tell the other lady that you have heard that a certain statement has been circulated about you, and ask on what authority. If the thing is pure invention, then you will have brought her to book in a more effectual way than by unpleasant legal measures. If the lady in question is clearly proved to have been malicious, then you are justified in terminating the acquaintance.

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The Brain Gymnasium.

In these competitions a prize of £1 1s. will be awarded each week to the competitor whose attempt we receive giving the correct solution of all the puzzles. If more than one is absolutely correct the prize of £1 1s. will be given to the first correct attempt dealt with.

If no lists of absolutely correct solutions are sent in, the first prize will be awarded to the competitor whose attempt is first dealt with showing the fewest mistakes.

Each week we shall award, in addition to the above, either ten of our gold-plated pencil-cases or ten popular novels, to be distributed amongst the competitors whose attempts are absolutely correct and have failed to win the first prize, or, if no complete lists of correct solutions are received, to those whose attempts show the fewest mistakes.

Write all your solutions on one side only of the paper, putting the number against each. Post the batch in an envelope marked "Brain Gymnasium, Nos. 37—42," to reach the Editor, *Short Stories*, 18 Henrietta Street, London, W.C., by first post on Monday, February 17th, 1902.

The Editor's decision is final, and competitors must only enter on that understanding.

Readers are invited to submit puzzles, acrostics, conundrums, word-squares, etc., for publication on this page. A gold-plated pencil-case will be given to each reader whose attempts are used. All attempts must be vouched for as original, and, of course, it is distinctly understood that the sender of a puzzle must neither compete in the competition nor divulge to anyone the solution. Any reader found infringing this rule will be severely dealt with.

No. 37. CHARADE.

My FIRST for wit was justly famed—
A well-known English poet:
My NEXT we do from morn till eve,
Yet never seem to know it.
My WHOLE, an effort to disguise,
Will not deceive the truly wise.

No. 38. ACROSTIC.

The initials of the following read downwards will form the name of a vegetable:

A famous town in France. A river in England. A town in the North of England. A lake in Asia. A river in Germany. A mountain in Asia. A city in Scotland. A historic town in India. A river in Africa.

No. 39. SQUARE WORD.

Part of the Solar system. To love. A bird. An endeavour. A man's name.

No. 40. BEHEADED WORDS.

1. I am to reside, behead me I am a spring.
2. I am to punish, behead me I am part of the body.
3. I am to fascinate, behead me I am to injure, behead me again and I am a part of the body.
4. I am a nut, behead me and I am to granulate.
5. I am to pull suddenly, behead me I am to charm, behead me again I am to irritate.
7. I am to educate, behead me I am water.
8. I am an instant, behead me I am a grain, behead me again I am used on cakes.
9. I am of little importance, behead me I am of great importance to soldiers.

No. 41. ENIGMA.

You will find me in the river,
Though I am not in the sea;
And I occupy a quiver,
But an arrow cannot be.
In the vineyard you may find me,
Yet I do not know the grape;
Common string will quickly bind me
Though I conquer cords and tape.
Ne'er a singer does without me,
Yet I never knew a song;
Mariners know all about me,
For to ships I must belong;
You might search in vain the ocean,
But you'll never find me there;
Still, I guide its every motion,
And completely fill the air.
If you're seeking wealth and pleasure,
Don't neglect me or you'll fail;
Can you guess the hidden treasure
Wrapped in this little tale?

No. 42. SENTENCE MAKING.

From the following words form a sentence:

Julie he more spite with an think he stopped the kindly branch you made in twisting I'd for just held nervous voice his strength little shake in all that of me with a then finished instant of a I hoped.

Result of "Brain Gymnasium," Nos. 19 to 24.

The prize of £1 1s. has been awarded to Miss H. M. Richmond, of 31 South Road, Handsworth, Birmingham, whose attempt was first to hand of those most correct.

A book has been sent to each of the following:

E. Wilson, 2 Orchard Villas, London Road, Ashford, Middlesex; Miss N. Rankmore, Golden Hill, Wiveliscombe, Somerset; W. Martin, 8 Drum Terrace, Leith; G. Humphreys, 19 Colville Street, Nottingham; D. S. Hill, West View, Knowle; J. D. Watts, 5 Nicholas Lane, E.C.; Miss E. M. Corbett, Ivy Hatch, Sevenoaks; Miss Wallbridge, 34 Montpelier Road, Peckham; Miss K. Brock, High Street, Botley, Hants; Mrs. J. H. Heeley, 12 Beaconsfield Road, Seaforth, Liverpool.

SOLUTIONS.

19. Then—hen.
Stone—tone—one.
Scold—cold—old.
Shovel—hovel.
Kill—ill.

20. ENTER.
NERVE.
TREES.
EVENT.
RESTS.

21. T hames.
A gra.
B erne.
L iverpool.
E ms.
T ralee.
E dinburgh.
N ova Scotia.
N orthumberland.
I taly.
S inai.

22. Sydney. Constance. Thorn. Fear. Small, Sandwiches. Sky(e). Black. Cloudy. Hunter. Deer Race.

23. The letter A.

24. Hit—her—to. Hitherto.

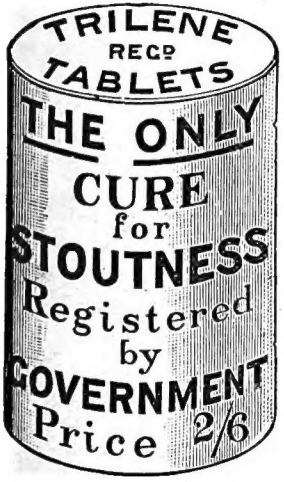
A Splendid new Serial by Louis Tracy starts on March 1st. Order a copy of SHORT STORIES to be reserved for you.

Printed by Horace Cox, Bream's Buildings, London, E.C., and published by C. Arthur Pearson Ltd., Pearson's Buildings, Henrietta Street, London, W.C.

ALL FAT PEOPLE

Can be **CURED** by taking

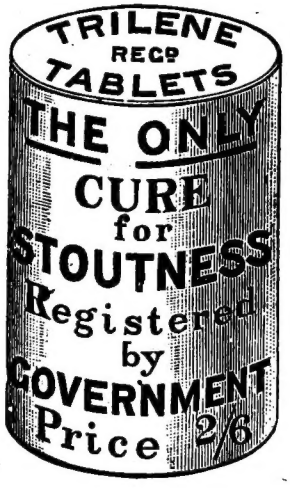
TRILENE TABLETS Regd.



For a few weeks. They will safely REDUCE WEIGHT and CURE CORPULENCY PERMANENTLY, whether Abdominal or General. They are small, agreeable, harmless, sent privately, and never fail to Improve both HEALTH and FIGURE without change of Diet.

An English Countess writes: "Your Trilene Tablets act admirably."

Send 2s. 6d. to THE TRILENE ASSOCIATION, 66 Finsbury Pavement, London, E.C.



SAMPLES OF TESTIMONIALS.

"87 Alexandra Road, Norwich, October 19th, 1896.

Gentlemen,—In reference to Trilene Tablets, I may say that my wife found the greatest possible benefit from the use of them; their action was rapid, and exceeded our utmost expectations, as they were also most beneficial to the respiratory organs. My wife was many years growing so stout, but although the disease was, I consider chronic, the Tablets soon reduced the same completely. You have our united thanks, and if I can do anything to promote your interests I will freely use my utmost endeavours to do so.

"Yours faithfully, J. R. CANHAM."

Mrs. DARNLEY SMITH, Landscove Vicarage, Ashburton, writes: "Trilene Tablets have reduced my weight very much. I am so much lighter in every way, and better in health."

COUNTESS SECKENDORFF, of Berlin, writes: "The Tablets greatly benefited me personally, and I am recommending them to friends."

MISS CHATTERTON, 7 Salisbury Villas, Banstead, Surrey, says: "I weighed 12st. 8lb., but am now 11st., and getting much better."

Nurse CROUCHER, at Mrs. Bennett's, 14 Buckleigh Road, Streatham, says: "I lost 9lb. from the box I took."

"77 Hindhill Street, Heywood, February 5th, 1898.

"Gentlemen,—I have not quite finished the box of Tablets and am 21lb. lighter. The change is great, and several friends are beginning the treatment, which not only reduces fat but strengthens rheumatic joints—such has been the case with me.

"Yours sincerely, M. A. HEYWOOD."

Mrs. D. BURTON, of Silverleigh, Tunbridge, writes: "I am very pleased with difference in size, my friends all telling me how much thinner I am getting."

Miss NORTHLEDGE, The Laurels, Riseholm Road, Lincoln, says: "The Tablets reduced me 1st., so that I am cured."

"West Cornforth, Ferryhill.

Mr. WM. USHER says: "A sister of mine, who was 17st., was greatly reduced by your Tablets to 15st."

Extract from *The Lady*, September 3rd, 1896: "Many stout persons have suffered untold agonies in unavailing efforts to reduce their bulk, either by means of severe dieting, or by taking more or less deleterious drugs; but all these pains would have been saved if they had only invested in a box of the wonderful Trilene Tablets, which are quite harmless, containing neither mercury, arsenic, nor any other mineral poison, and which are an unfailing cure for obesity."

MRS. T. BOSTON, Cambridge Villas, Clifford Street, South Wigston, says: "I congratulate you on your wonderful Tablets. My weight at first starting them was 11st. 7lb., and I now weigh 9st. 11lb."

Mr. MCLEOD, 44 Calside, Paisley, writes: "I have been cured. If you want to know my weight now, it is 10st.; reduced 1st. 6lb., and I am quite content."

A. M. PRATT, of Ongar House, Ongar, says: "My weight is so much reduced it is unnecessary to take more. The reduction of weigh was from 12st. 6lb. to 10st. 4lb."

Mrs. H. COX, 28 Watnall Road, Hucknall Torkard, writes: "The box of Tablets has reduced my weight 1½ stones."

Mr. WALKER, 236 London Road, Hazelgrove, Stockport, says: "I have used one box and am 14lb. lighter. Send another soon as possible."

Col.-Sergt. WHITTLE, of East Lancashire Regt., Burnley, Lancs., says: "A man in our regiment in 1891 lost several stone from taking your Tablets."

Mrs. E. ALEXANDER, 102 Dixon Street, New Swindon, says: "They have reduced me quite 2 stone, and I am now quite cured."

Mrs. W. A. RADFORD, of High Street, New Brinsley, Eastwood, writes: "Before taking Tablets I was 46 inches round waist, now I am 32 inches. I hope soon to be 23. I could hardly move or get up, now I get about easily. Please use this as you wish."

Countess FURSTENBERG, of Germany, writes: "They act speedily and well."

The Princess LIECHTENSTEIN writes from Landsberg, Austria: "Pray send me your excellent Tablets."

Mrs. WEAVER, of Greenpits Villa, Ross, Hereford, writes: "I am reduced from 13st. 8lb. to 11st. You may use this if you like."

Mrs. CROSSLEY, of Rose Hill, Torver, nr. Coniston, says: "There is a very decided diminution of fat. I am delighted, and cannot speak too highly in praise of Tablets. My heart is better, and I can breathe so much easier. You may refer to me as often as you like."

Lady C. CONRAD writes from Wiesbaden: "I am very pleased with your Tablets."

Mrs. TAYLOR-ROBINSON, of Tweed Green House, Whalley Range, Manchester, says: "I feel so much lighter and better since taking your Tablets, and am so much thinner that I hardly recognise myself."

Miss A. LONG, of 9 South Parade, Waterford, writes: "Your Tablets have reduced me 14lb."

Miss A. DAWSON, 62 Orchard Street, Weston-super-Mare, says: "Glad to say the Tablets have sufficiently reduced me. I shall always recommend them."

Miss F. L. BALL, 47 Chesterfield Road, St. Andrews, Bristol, writes: "I am quite cured through your Tablets. They improve the figure, and greatly relieve shortness of breath."

Miss PATIENT, of Woodberry, Theydon Bois: "Feel great benefit from Tablets. I have lost 2st., and am sufficiently reduced."

Mrs. DREW, of 1 Bellevue Gardens, The Nursery, Devizes, writes: "I took Tablets some years ago; they soon reduced me and I have not got stout since Send me a box for my mother."

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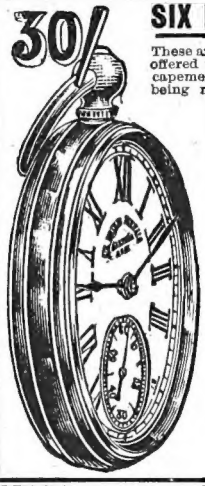
SIX PRIZE-MEDAL WATCHES.



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GENTS' or LADY'S { SILVER KEYWIND ... 30/- GOLD ,, ... 126/- SILVER KEYLESS ... 42/- GOLD ,, 84/- & 126/-

Silver Watches, 5/- Monthly. Gold Watches, 21/- Monthly.

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